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THE SISTERS:

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.



VOL. I.

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THE SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

“ When the fight of grace is fought,—
When the marriage vest is wrought,—
When Faith hath chased cold Doubt away,
And Hope but sickens at delay,—
When Charity, imprisoned here,
Longs for a more expanded sphere,
Doff thy robes of sin and clay;
Christain, rise, and come away.”

IT was on a fine clear evening that Felicia Leycester yielded to the entreaties of a dying relative, and sought in the little garden that surrounded her humble habitation to regain that serenity which anxiety and grief had banished from her bosom.

It was late in June: the rays of the setting sun illuminated the gothic windows of the village church, and flashed bright in the latticed casements of her home. The long shadows of

evening softly blended with the golden radiance of declining day—a balmy breeze gently waved the feathery branches of the surrounding trees, while the soft trills of the thrush, pouring out its evening song, mingled with the lively chatter of the swallow, and the distant sound of the sheep-bell.

But Felicia's eye and ear were closed against these charms. She had been for months ministering to the declining health of a more than parent, and her spirits had gradually sunk under the task. Yet during her long and painful watchings by the couch of sickness, she felt no weariness—no real anguish till now, when she had ceased to hope the protectress of her infancy would repay her cares, and revive to life and health. Long had she turned with horror from the contemplation of such a separation, and buoyed up by the ardour of youth, flattered herself the impending blow was far distant,—that the existence which was dearer to her than life itself, might be prolonged to an interminable period. Vainly had Mrs. Beauclerc's medical attendants refused to sanction her hopes, or Mrs. Beauclerc entreated her to prepare for what she felt was inevitable. The sunny

brightness of a youthful breast, the effervescence of an unworn spirit cannot be depressed; and Felicia continued to cherish the delusion, to hope even against hope.

She knew that she must at some period be torn from this dear relative—that her long indisposition must terminate in dissolution; but she could not bear to think that “the life which made her own life pleasant” was near its close—that the gates of death would soon shut upon her prospects. Nor is this unwillingness to approximate what we dread, a weakness peculiar to the young. We all know we must submit to the unavoidable ills of life, but we studiously turn away from whatever is calculated to remind us of them; and by a strange kind of infatuation seem to imagine that the impending stroke of affliction may be delayed by never suffering ourselves to reflect upon its approach.

But on this fatal evening the illusive visions which had so long overshadowed her reason were dispelled; and one overwhelming thought absorbed every agonized feeling. The fearful moment of separation must now she felt soon arrive, and it was in vain she tried to soften its

horrors. She had indulged idle hopes of future felicity ; her fancy had followed a meteor of happiness kindled by herself, till her mind had become unequal to bear the weight of the blow she ought to have been prepared for enduring.

For the first time she saw she was on the eve of parting with her whose care had supplied the place of her earthly parents ; whose kindness had soothed her infant sufferings ; and whose love had shed a warmer glow over the dawning joys of life. Even in a few short hours she, whose maternal affection struggling with the agonies of death, had banished her from the pillow of sickness, might be no more—the eye, whose fond glance she had been accustomed to watch with love and reverence, might be enshrouded for ever—the hand, which had guided her infancy, nerveless in death—the tongue, whose silver tones had breathed only the accents of tenderness and virtue, hushed in the grave—and the heart, throbbing with all the warm feelings of humanity, cold in its silent bosom. A sensation of chilly alarm stole over her shuddering frame as this awful picture arose to her imagination, and she shrank from

contemplating even in their fairest forms the awful characters of death. Yet no apprehension for the fate of the pilgrim, so soon to enter into an unknown world, mingled with her emotion. She felt assured the spirit, now bowed down by its frail tenement, would soar to a better world—be arrayed in the light and glory of immortality. It was that vague indefinite sensation with which we are doomed to view the first punishment of guilty man, the first curse of an offended Creator, and the soul vainly tries to shake off its mysterious lesson.

The romantic shadows of twilight were gradually fading away in the mild glories of a cloudless moon, when Felicia returned to the chamber of sickness, and stole softly to the side of her aunt. Her eyes were closed, and the hand of death had already imprinted a ghastliness that struck her with terror. Yet the serenity of her pale features remained unimpaired. It was the sunken eye—the livid hue—that alone betrayed the approach of dissolution. The soul seemed wrapt in a holy calm—Felicia hung over the bed with anguished solicitude, and fearful of disturbing the fluttering spirit, suppressed the struggling sighs of

a breaking heart ; but her tears fell fast, and one unconsciously dropped on the marble hand of the dying object of her tenderness. She looked up ; the moon streamed full on her face—it was already moulded into more than mortal beauty, and a smile of ineffable sweetness lighted up her faded eyes.

“ Dear child,” said she, fondly pressing her trembling hand, “ how grateful ought I to be that my last moments have been blessed by thy affection.”

Felicia tried to articulate, but a convulsive sob alone burst from her pallid lips. Mrs. Beauclerc raised her eyes : “ I bless thee, O, Father, that thou hast listened to my supplications ; I can now leave this dear pledge of a dying sister’s confidence without fear.” Again her lips moved, but the sound died away.

“ Felicia, my beloved !” she cried, struggling to acquire strength, “ weep not for me. The Father of the fatherless will support thee. Thou mayest not be exempt from sorrow, for those whom he loveth he chasteneth ; but be firm in virtue, and every successive trial will crown thee with brighter honor. I must, indeed, leave thee ; but I leave thee not, even in

this world, without consolation. May he whom thou lovest reward thy affection, and appreciate thy merit; and when, like me, thou art on the brink of the grave, may thy Heavenly Protector shed a gleam of brightness to cheer thee through the dark valley of death !”

She paused, overpowered by emotion, and Felicia wildly throwing herself on the bed, gave way to the anguish which shook her frame almost to insensibility.

“ Dear child,” she cried in a low tremulous voice, “ moderate these transports. *Let no earthly love engross the best affections of thy soul.* Place not thy hopes of happiness on creatures frail and mutable as thyself, lest when they are snatched from thee by death, thou canst not look beyond the tomb for a glorious re-union.”

Her voice faltered, the damps of death sat on her changing brow, and her eyes closed as if in sleep.

Felicia scarcely respired : she felt ashamed of disturbing the silence of such a moment with the ebullitions of uncontrolled grief, and motionless she remained where she had thrown herself.

Deepening shadows proclaimed the approach

of evening. The loneliness of night came on—and all was breathlessly still. Felicia's eyes were fixed on her aunt, and by the fluctuating light of an expiring taper, she thought she slept. Gradually the dark clouds of midnight dispersed—the glad signs of approaching dawn met her eyes, and the first rays of early morning, streaking with uncertain light the distant horizon, dimly streamed through the half-closed shutters.

“Blessed be Heaven, she has lived to see another day!” was Felicia's fond and silent aspiration, as a gleam of radiance shed its quivering ray on the features of her aunt, and the dim eyes, which she had feared she might never more see illumined by the beams of life, slowly opened. One glance, fond—lingering—anxious—met Felicia's; and she was breathing a half-expressed prayer of joy, when they closed—the hand she had so long grasped grew cold and motionless. She eagerly gazed in her face to receive again the look of love; but in vain. It was the last expression of dying attachment—the pure spirit had left its earthly mansion,—was gone to kindred angels!

Felicia clasped her arms around the body

with frantic emotion, and bent her head to catch once more the accents of that voice so dear!—but no sound broke the dreary stillness—no heart throbbed against her's—all was cold—silent as the grave—and when dread certainty burst on her tortured senses, overpowered nature sunk under the stroke.

CHAPTER II.

“ Oh ! weep not for ‘ her,’ ’tis unkindness to weep ;
The weak weary body hath fallen asleep ;
No more of fatigue or endurance it knows :
Oh ! weep not—Oh ! break not the gentle repose.
‘ She’ sleeps—Oh, how kindly, on Jesus’s breast !
Never more the sick dreamings shall trouble ‘ her’ rest ;
And her lips, that would healing and comfort restore,
Shall burn ‘ her’ cold lips and cold cheeks never more.”

Neale.

WHEN the iron hand of adversity first presses on the youthful heart, it believes that all human happiness is swept away for ever, and that the anguish of the present bitter hour will impregnate the cup of life to its close. But an all-wise Creator, ever alive to the weaknesses and sorrows of his creatures, has mercifully appointed bounds to still the raging ocean, and the yet wilder emotions of the human heart. The agony with which Felicia first contemplated the irreparable loss she had sustained, gradually subsided into the calmness of chastised grief ; and although, with the inexperience of early

youth, she thought this heavy dispensation would ever cast a shade over her future days, she regained sufficient composure to write to the relative who had promised, on Mrs. Beauclerc's dissolution, to grant her an asylum,—and perform the necessary duties which fond affection has a melancholy pleasure in paying to the loved remains of departed worth.

Even the performance of these sad offices tends to detach the mind from the contemplation of its sorrows, and alleviates the first bitterness of separation. But these were not the only sources of Felicia's composure. She remembered the dying admonitions of expiring tenderness, and the perturbations of her spirit were soothed by the hope of a reunion with her she mourned—by the consciousness that the enfranchised spirit was now the inhabitant of purer skies, of a more congenial world. Oh! what indeed can support the bereaved heart under such a separation, but the assurance that the soul we love has exchanged an earthly for an heavenly habitation,—thrown off mortality to put on brightness, and honour, and happiness for ever and ever.

The letters she had addressed to her aunt, Lady

Wyedale, was instantly answered by her only sister, Rosalind Leycester, repeating Lady Wyedale's promise of protection, till her marriage with a gentleman to whom she had been sometime engaged could take place, and requesting to see her without delay in Russel-square.

But though grateful for Lady Wyedale's wish to save her from witnessing the awful ceremony of Mrs. Beauclerc's interment, Felicia could not bear to tear herself from her remains till the tomb should wrest them from her view. Hers was the love that clings to the object of its tenderness even in death, and feels that the pang which marked the flight of the disembodied spirit, is scarcely less acute than that which shoots through the heart when the inanimate form is torn from the eyes which have had a mournful joy in dwelling on its altered features, in fancying that the link which bound them together is not yet entirely sundered. And both from affection and respect she resolved to watch by the relics of her almost parent till they were committed to their native earth.

Death is always an awful visitor, but he

is never more felt than when his fell scythe sweeps down one on whom we have been accustomed to look with reverence, as well as affection—one who has been a guide as well as companion—a protector as well as friend. When such a one is wrested from us, we experience a sensation of desolateness that is more pitiable than the most poignant affliction, and the mind long vainly seeks to recover from the blow. The unaffected piety—the calm resignation—the patient sickness—the undeviating tenderness—the tranquil death—increase the bitterness of our grief—the greatness of our loss.

Oh, these are the sorrows which teach us to fix our hopes on another world; for these admit of no earthly consolation. The friend we mourn is gone into the grave and can no more return to us!—But though the object of our unavailing regret will never again bless our mortal sight, we know that the soul we loved liveth for ever, and in the hope of a blissful re-union we learn to lie down in that dark chamber, with resignation to the will of Him, who hath appointed it the passage to immortality.

During the melancholy interval between Mrs. Beauclerc's decease and interment, Felicia had none to console her—none to avert from her mind the dreary solemnity of the scene. The only attendant she admitted to her privacy was herself too much under its influence to sooth or allay the sufferings of another. She was faithful and affectionate, but the very child of terror; and in committing her alarms to Felicia, felt herself partly relieved from their oppressive weight. She detailed the many omens and prognostics, which she insinuated had deprived her of any feeling of surprise on this mournful occasion, till Felicia, her mind weakened by sorrow and solitude, almost partook of her apprehensions;—startled at every gust, and as her eye glanced on the chilly, lonely appearance of the apartments felt her anguish heightened by the indescribable alarms of superstition.

“Yet why am I thus terrified?” she sometimes mentally reasoned: “I must soon be even as she is—cold—stiff—insensible,—I too shall become an object of terror, till the grave shall shut me from the land of the living!”

And as this solemn picture passed before

her eyes, she thought she should never again feel any interest in the pursuits of so fleeting an existence.

With that intenseness of feeling which refuses the relief of tears, she bent over the grave of Mrs. Beauclerc, and when the coffin vanished from her aching sight, returned to her desolate home with sensations of dreariness and anguish that mocked the voice of consolation.

When the pomp of death is over, the awful paraphernalia completed, and the body we loved consigned to its narrow bed; the agony which attends this second parting is more tolerable than the stillness, the deathly calmness which follows. Nothing more remained to be done to evince her love or respect: she now felt the whole of her loss, and two days she had indulged in unrestrained grief, when she was aroused by the information that Mr. Evanmore desired to see her, if only for a few minutes. His petition, as that of her affianced husband, she felt she could not decline, and she summoned resolution to enter the room where he sat. He had accompanied her to the last home of Mrs. Beauclerc, but no intercourse

had taken place since her dissolution, and sobs impeded her utterance when she tried to say she was happy to see him.

He gazed on her sickly features with tender concern. "Dear Felicia," cried he, fondly drawing her nearer to him, "for my sake check these unavailing regrets. Remember your aunt is now receiving the reward of a life passed in the exercise of every virtue, and rather rejoice that she has passed that dark vale which all must tread."

Felicia pressed his hand, but was unable to reply, and Evanmore anxiously sought to introduce some less distressing topic.

"When are we to part, dear Felicia?" said he, in a tone of affectionate interest.

"The day after to-morrow I purpose setting off for town."

"So soon! surely Felicia it is not kind to tear yourself thus early from me. Yet I will not press your stay, I believe you are best away; but remember those you leave behind. In the delights of the gay metropolis remember the claims of him, whose affection was hal-
lowed by the sanction of your aunt."

"Oh, never! never!" cried she, "shall I

forget them. The world can bestow no friends so dear as those from whom I shall be separated,—no pleasures so pure as those I have left behind me.”

“ You think so now ; but you have hitherto lived in seclusion. You have seen little of life, and I own I fear,” his voice faltered, “ when surrounded by the brilliant circles of the great, receiving the homage of men more gifted than myself, you will learn to forget the humble scenes and associates of your youth.”

“ If I did not regard these suspicions as the ravings of a lover, I should be tempted to feel angry at their injustice,” said she with a smile. “ I have many faults, but I flatter myself selfishness, caprice, and ingratitude are not in the catalogue.”

“ Dear Felicia, forgive me, I meant not to breathe the slightest censure. I know you are the most generous and affectionate of beings ; but it is so natural for a young mind to yield to such allurements, that I dreaded even your’s might not be able to withstand their fascination.”

“ Not natural, surely, to lose amongst strangers the remembrance of those whose dis-

interested attachment brightened the morning of our life! And, oh! Evanmore, can you fear that she, whose mind was formed by an angel, could banish from her breast in scenes of gaiety and joy, the sacred engagement into which she had voluntarily entered?"

Evanmore caught her to his breast. "How I have wronged you! Oh, Felicia, dearer to me now than when I first sought to obtain your affections, forget my unfounded doubts, and let not my jealous apprehensions prevent you from mixing in that society, from partaking of those amusements from which you have, perhaps, hitherto been too much excluded. With your exalted disposition, your virtuous principles, I fear not you will pass the ordeal, and like fine gold tried in the crucible, become yet more valuable to your Evanmore and the world."

"The suspicions of a lover have ended with the flatteries of one," said Felicia, faintly smiling through her tears. "But I must not suffer myself to be deluded by them. The world is, I am aware, a scene of severe temptation; and while I now think it scarcely possible for me to suffer from its contagion, I must,

when environed by its dangers, be careful that presumptuous confidence may not effect that, which, while unexposed and secure, I deemed so impossible."

"I have no fears," said Evanmore gaily.

Felicia shook her head; but the smile that dwelt on her lips strengthened the confidence of her lover, and they parted amid mutual protestations of never-changing attachment.

CHAPTER III.

“ Full well she knew to scatter virtue’s seed
In fair profusion o’er the fruitful heart ;
To pluck betimes rank vice’s poisoned weed,
That soon with deepening root would mock her art ;
To act the Mentor and companion’s part ;
To lure to knowledge, while she seem’d to play,
And, grave Instruction’s formal looks apart,
To teach the youth to walk in wisdom’s way,
Which she would fondly paint in hues of opening day—”

THOUGH Felicia shrunk from the moment that would tear her from the home which had sheltered her infancy, from the friends whose kindness and fondness had brightened even the sunny season of youth, and separate her for ever from the dear remains of her who had nursed her helpless infancy, and watched over her dawn with a mother’s care, many fair pre-sages of future happiness lent their aid to soften the parting pang.

She was going for the first time into a new world, and all its scenes were illumined by the

sunshine of inexperience, and the glowing spirit of gay nineteen. She was on the eve of being united, she hoped never more to part, with a sister scarcely a year younger than herself, whose image was entwined around every fibre of her heart. Years had elapsed since they met, but the pleasing impression left on her mind by Rosalind's sprightly, open countenance, and engaging, animated manners, had sunk so deep, that time and absence vainly interposed to obliterate it.

Sentiment, as well as affection also, contributed to keep alive in such a bosom as Felicia's, the attachment of childhood. They were the orphan daughters of a Major Leycester, who was killed in action, and during the first eight years of their existence had lived with their widowed mother. Grief for the loss of a husband, loved to such excess, that she had sacrificed for him a father's home, and a father's blessing, united to a constitution naturally delicate, then bowed the fragile flower to its native earth; and the little orphans were torn from each other's embrace to enter into very different scenes. Felicia, the eldest, was received under the roof of a maternal aunt, the

honourable Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc : Rosalind, was claimed by the sister of her late father, Lady Wyedale.

Mrs. Beauclerc, the eldest sister of Mrs. Leycester, was the only member of the family who condescended to notice her after her union with Major Leycester, and she had wished to extend her maternal kindness equally to her youngest niece ; but Major Leycester, apprehending Mrs. Leycester might not survive to protect his children to woman-hood, had consented that Rosalind should be consigned to his sister should she be deprived of a mother's care. Nor was he sorry that his sister's wish to adopt her god daughter, would tend to relieve Mrs. Beauclerc from the heavy responsibility of providing for both his children. He was a soldier of fortune, and though his manners possessed the high polish of military refinement, he was more indebted to nature for a fine person and superior understanding, than to birth or education ; for his father was a country clergyman struggling with a large family, and his sister owed her elevation in society to the same personal attractions which had induced Mrs. Leycester to relinquish all the allurements

of rank and affluence, to share his humble views. His high spirit had been deeply wounded by the continued neglect of her friends, and though the undeviating kindness of Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc had awakened his warmest gratitude, he felt almost hurt, that his children should owe any thing to their mother's family ; and would have been happy had Lady Wyedale offered her protection ere he had acceded to Mrs. Beauclerc's request.

Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc was a woman of great natural talent, improved by a judicious and superior education, at a time when the fashion of the day deemed it wrong to instruct women even to write their native tongue with ease and propriety ; or capriciously bestowed upon them a species of learning which, as it then rendered them prodigies and wonders, generally made them useless and conceited. Her mother wisely pursued the middle path, and laboured to preserve her equally from the dangers of ignorance, and the errors of pedantry. Gentle by nature, pious from a deep practical conviction of the truths of Christianity, humble in her opinion of herself, and upright in the discharge of every duty to her

Creator and fellow-creatures, Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc was eminently calculated to form the ductile mind of early youth. She received the little Felicia as the melancholy legacy of an unfortunate sister, and resolved to supply to her infant charge the parent she had lost. To the conscientious discharge of this important trust, she devoted every moment she could snatch from the various avocations of her exalted sphere. With gentle, but unceasing labour, she tried to instil into her mind the elements of virtue, and the rudiments of knowledge; and her cares, her love, were repaid by the enthusiastic attachment, the unbounded respect of her young *protégée*.

Felicia was gifted by nature with every feminine feeling, and Mrs. Beauclerc studied to concentrate in her bosom all that makes woman dear and estimable, rather than brilliant or fascinating.

It is seldom that they who are duly impressed with the principles of religion, and whose conduct is guided by its precepts, fail to acquire influence over those with whom they are united by the bonds of intimacy. The tribute of esteem cannot be denied them, and those who

are in the daily habit of witnessing their personal adherence to the tenets they profess, almost invariably imbibe their sentiments.

The young Felicia, accustomed to consider her aunt as her only friend, the source of her earthly happiness, and to regard her in the light of a superior being, felt anxious to repay her kindness, to resemble her in her virtues; and the instinctive imitation of childhood, strengthened by the judicious instruction of such a preceptress, tended to render her a combination of all the kindly elements, mingled with the firmness of the Christian character.

Mrs. Beauclerc was a woman of high birth, but slender fortune, for her family had been unshaken adherents to the cause of the Stuarts, and her portion as a younger child was a bare six thousand pounds, together with a life interest in a small paternal estate. She had early pledged her affections to an amiable man; but though the family refused not their concurrence, as both were young, and he possessed little beside an illustrious name, he sought on the shores of India to acquire that competency without which no marriage can be a happy one. But in the chequered scene of human life the race

is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, and, after spending ten years in the pursuit of riches, he returned with a trifling fortune and broken constitution, to die in the arms of her whose youth and loveliness had been wasted in unavailing regret at his absence.

“Happiness is not a plant of this earth,” said the youthful mourner, as she contemplated the wreck of all her fair visions of bliss, “but peace and tranquillity may yet be mine, if I steadily pursue the path of virtue. I shall indeed be a solitary, unheeded, unconnected being, in the midst of a busy, happy world; every friend of my youth will gradually become estranged, or lost to me, and none will arise to fill the chasm in my heart; but let me not despair: our existence here is so short, it is almost immaterial whether it passes in joy or grief, provided it be spent in piety.”

Yet sorrow threw a strong shade over her mind, and she turned with distaste from those gay scenes which had never possessed real charms for her.

But like the brilliant orb of day when obscured by passing clouds, a beam of radiance shone at intervals through the thin veil, and

showed that its glories were only diminished, not extinguished. Time assuaged the bitterness of her grief ere the little Felicia was committed to her care; and in watching the luxuriant unfoldings of that good seed she had implanted, her heart once more dilated with pleasure.

Assured that Lady Wyedale, who had no family of her own, would consider Rosalind as her child, it had been her intention to bequeath the whole of her little property to Felicia; but Felicia, aware of her design, so earnestly entreated that Rosalind might share it with her, that she was unable to refuse a petition which accorded so entirely with her own generous feelings, and was so honourable to her favourite niece. She was however half tempted to revert to her original determination, when Felicia caught the affections, and received the addresses of Mr. Evanmore; for though her self-denying habits and judicious economy enabled her to support her station on a narrow income, she had been so accustomed to all the refinements of polished life, and to witness the unbounded extravagance that usually accompanies them, that she feared Mr. Evanmore's for-

tune alone would scarcely supply the expenses incident to his rank and Felicia's. But Felicia refused to admit of any alteration in her favour, and Mr. Evanmore so warmly seconded her wishes, that Mrs. Beauclerc reluctantly consented to adhere to her promise.

With Mr. Evanmore she had been slightly acquainted from his infancy, and when he sought her consent to his union with Felicia, there was a something so mild, so gentlemanly, so pleasing in his manners and deportment, that she felt happy in the idea of resigning her beloved child to his protection, though his fortune was scarcely fifteen hundred a year, encumbered with a jointure of five hundred during the life of his mother with whom he resided. But he stood high in the esteem of the world, and she watched their growing attachment with the fond eyes of approving love. Some few errors she had perceived in Evanmore, but they were such as seemed almost incident to his character and age: such as, she doubted not, time, and the firmer mind of his affianced bride would easily eradicate. Lady Wyedale had promised to afford her a home till Evanmore could claim her as his own,

and without a fear she committed the cherished object of her tenderness to a stormy world, secure that that Being who never slumbereth nor sleepeth would guard her from every real ill.

CHAPTER IV.

Dear seat of my childhood, for ever adieu !
Too soon wilt thou fade from my sorrowing view,
And the riv'let that winds at the foot of this tree
Reflect on its bosom no image of me.
Yet oft shall my fancy revisit this scene,
And tread, as in childhood, each mountain and green,
Where careless I pluck'd the gay flow'rets of May,
Nor grieved that these joys pass so quickly away.
How often shall Memory pencil the spot
Where bosom'd in trees stood the villager's cot;
Its straw-cover'd roof peeping soft through the spray,
Its garden with wall-flowers and holly-oak gay :
Or see mid the thicket, when morning first broke,
Curling light to the breeze the hamlet's blue smoke.
And thy tower, lov'd Leominster, all glitt'ring with dew,
How oft shalt thou stand in my fanciful view !
Still, still thou shalt teach my fond spirit to rise,
And point as in youth every hope to the skies.

THE first pale rays of dawning day scarcely glimmered on the distant horizon, when Felicia stole into that room which for years had ap-

Her only attendant, an esteemed servant of the late Mrs. Beauclerc's, seemed very unwilling to allow her this indulgence; but Felicia, waving her hand with gentle firmness, intimated that she would be obeyed, and saying she should rejoin her at the extremity of Leominster, commenced her melancholy walk.

It was long ere her trembling hand gained strength to open the little gate that, when closed, would shut her out for ever from the peaceful domain which had been the seat of all her earthly happiness, and she lingered in its narrow portal till her sobs became painfully audible even to herself. She then burst from the enchantment that seemed to bind her to this hallowed spot, and, without daring to look back, flew along the path till she reached the well-known point where, shrouded in trees, it faded from her view. She paused, and turned on its modest beauties the glistening eyes of fond affection and unbounded admiration.

The clear serene azure of a summer's sky was streaked with long lines of glowing crimson, and the sun, robed in clouds of dazzling whiteness, threw a flood of mellow lustre over the eastern hills. Scarcely a breath of air

disturbed the fringy lightness of the silvery birch, and the stillness of dawn was broken only by the cawing of the early rook.

All was calm repose and unruffled harmony around the mansion of her youth. The rich green velvet of its little lawn glittered in the dew of morning, and its transparent drops hung like diamond pendants on the honey-suckle that clustered in unrestrained luxuriance around the rustic porch.

It is a distinguishing feature in the mind of man, that blessings, while in possession, are never sufficiently estimated ; but, when gone, they are invested by capricious fancy with undue importance. It is in the winter only we know how to appreciate the beauties of summer : and we must have felt the pains of sickness, the unkindness of the world, ere we can be sensible of the value of health or the consolations of friendship. When dark clouds overspread the face of Heaven, and the chastening hand of a watchful Providence robs us of those unnumbered blessings which we had received without gratitude and enjoyed without pleasure, we then look back on our former state with envy and regret ; and through the long vista of life

we perceive no pleasures to compensate for those we have lost. Oh, let us rather learn to estimate the mercies we still possess, than impatiently lament those we can no longer call ours !

Never, even to Felicia, had the seat of her childhood looked so lovely as now, and many minutes elapsed ere she had power to tear her streaming eyes from the fascinating landscape. With lingering steps she pursued her lonely way, and crossed for the last time the rural bridge that led to the church-yard. There she paused, and dreaded to proceed : she feared to encourage feelings that might seem to militate against the wisdom that appointed a separation from the friend who was reposing in her silent tomb ; and as this idea flashed across her imagination, she leaned for support against the ivy-bound trunk of a spreading ash.

A broad but shallow stream, whose transparent waters revealed its pebbly bed, gently murmured at her feet, and reflected on its placid bosom the shadowy branches of its sheltering trees. The Gothic tower of the village church, its airy pinnacles, grey with the moss of ages, rose in silent grandeur to the eye, and formed

a striking contrast to the profusion of lowly cottages peeping through the trees that more than half obscured them: while the wide-extended landscape beyond was intersected by thick hedges of privet, whose dark myrtle-like leaves and snowy blossoms mingled in beautiful variety with the fragrant bloom of the flexile woodbine and blushing petals of the wild rose.

Every object was familiar to Felicia as the features of an early friend, and she gazed with tearful emotion, till the sun, which had been partially obscured by clouds, rolled forth in radiant glory, and poured through the peaceful valley warm rays of golden lustre. His beams rested on the grave whose narrow confines sheltered her to whom she owed more than being, and as she turned from this mournful object, she exclaimed in a low voice,

“Hallowed be the turf that covers thee, for it shrouds the last home of the righteous!”

The chaise had now reached the grassy lane that led to the turnpike road. With a breaking heart she sprung into it, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud.

Her companion, whose long residence in the

family authorised her to the use of many little freedoms, sought to assuage her grief by picturing the delights which awaited her in the splendid region to which she was hastening; but these, though mingled with many homely consolations, and moralizing remarks, were lost, with her voice, to the ear of her young mistress, till at a turning of the road she suddenly exclaimed,

“ Ah dear! Ah dear! if there aint Mister Evanmore, never trust me !”

The name caught Felicia's attention, and eagerly looking out of the window, she beheld him at some little distance watching the approach of the chaise. He looked weary, and aware that he must have walked six or seven miles to give her the meeting, she unconsciously exclaimed, “ How attentive! Yet I am sorry he should have incurred so much fatigue.”

“ As to that Ma'am,” said the loquacious Jenny, to whose ears the sound of her own voice was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, “ I must say, I think Mr. Evanmore only shows his respect. I never thought but what he would, and, indeed, I shouldn't ha’

thought so well on him if he hadn't; for if a man will not walk four or five miles afore marriage, when he's a courting like, there's no hopes of his turning out any great matters after."

The stopping of the chaise interrupted further comments.

"I could not neglect this opportunity of bidding you once more adieu, Miss Leycester," said Mr. Evanmore, throwing open the door, and placing in her hands a small basket of choice fruit. "I have also brought you the last night's paper. Both I hope will be acceptable to you, and," he spoke lower, "remind you of me!" "Heaven bless you, my Felicia! I shall soon rejoin you in London!" were his last words, as he fondly kissed his hand, and Felicia disappeared from his view.

Jenny was profuse in indirect encomiums on his gallantry, while Felicia, gratified by these delicate marks of his affection, felt her drooping spirits revive. As she pursued her journey, brilliant visions of future happiness floated before her imagination, and she sketched, with the romance of a glowing heart, in vivid colours,

the portraits of those who were now to supply the chasm made in her affections by the loss of her earliest friend.

Twice, after they were torn weeping from each other's little arms, Rosalind and herself had met for a few weeks, and her mind then appeared formed to equal the loveliness of her exterior. But six years had rolled away since Rosalind spent a fortnight at Leominster, for though Mrs. Beauclerc constantly invited her to pass a part of every year at the cottage, its distance from town, and Lady Wyedale's unwillingness to part with her, had operated to render their separation a more decided one. They had, however, sometimes exchanged letters, and every voice concurred in representing Rosalind as the loveliest and most attractive of women. She had, by the indulgence of her aunt, already been introduced two years, and fame ascribed to her a host of admirers.

As she drew nearer to the termination of her journey, she imagined the mournful pleasure with which her aunt would receive another child of her darling brother;—the joy with which Rosalind would receive, never again to be disunited, the sister of her affections. She

saw her, bright in youthful beauty, sitting at the window anxiously watching her appearance, her work dropping from her hands at the sound of every rolling wheel—her eye liquid with the soft tears of blended joy and grief. And her heart swelled with delight as her fancy dwelt on the idea of having herself a home in which to shelter this darling sister, if it should be the will of Heaven to rob her of her present kind protector, before she had found some one on whom to bestow her hand.

At length the carriage drove into the crowded streets of London, and Felicia for the first time was in the metropolis of England. But its splendor, its gaiety, its bustle, was unnoticed by her. The wondering exclamations of her companion were equally unheeded—one idea alone occupied her mind—one image alone flitted before her eyes. She was on the point of being clasped in the arms of her sister—and when the carriage stopped at the door of an elegant residence in Russel-square, her heart palpitated with such violence, that she could scarcely alight without assistance.

Two footmen in superb liveries conducted her up a spacious flight of stairs into a mag-

nificent drawing-room, whose ample dimensions mocked her almost fainting sight.

“Rosalind!” she cried in a low voice as she sprung forwards.

“My Lady and Miss Leycester are from home Ma’am,” said one of the attendants, placing her a chair; “they will not, I believe, be long absent. They were obliged to attend a china auction.”

Felicia did not reply. An icy hand seemed to chill the warm current of her beating heart, and she sunk breathless on a sofa.

CHAPTER V.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—Oh, and is all forgot ?

Shakspeare.

THE sudden shock which Felicia had received from the apparent indifference of her aunt and sister, kept her in a state of undefined yet painful emotion till the entrance of the house-keeper. She came in to apologize for their absence, and offer her refreshments. A little re-assured by her declaration, that necessity obliged them to leave the house at such a period, she followed her to the apartment destined for her use, and, after taking a cup of chocolate, tried to reason herself once more into the same blissful visions which had been so rapidly put to flight.

“ I must not expect from all the world

the same wakeful attachment, the same marks of flattering affection, that the fondness of my dear aunt lavished upon me. My feelings are too acute. Often has she warned me against indulging that trembling sensibility to which she feared I was subject." And after inflicting this mental censure, she surveyed the lofty drawing-room with blended feelings of admiration and astonishment.

The walls were hung with the most costly paintings ; and all that affluence could command, or luxury invent, seemed exhausted. The sweetest perfumes breathed from the flowers that filled the profusion of magnificent china vases. Indian cabinets and inlaid tables were scattered around in rich disorder : all, indeed, that refined taste, capricious fancy, or boundless wealth could desire, seemed collected into this superb apartment. The *coup d'œil* was strikingly grand and elegant ; but Felicia's eyes wandered from one splendid object to another, rather with curiosity than pleasure, and she soon averted them, to gaze with more interest on a gilded harp which her heart claimed as Rosalind's. She eagerly walked up to it. Several pieces of music were lying on a rose-

wood stand by the instrument. She took up a French song with an emotion indescribable, and pressed it to her lips. "Rosalind," she was articulating, when her eye glancing over the words, it fell from her fingers with a blush of shame and regret.

"These cannot be the sentiments of Rosalind!" said she, throwing it from her. "Oh, no! it has been sent to her by mistake, and she has never seen it." Alas! Felicia knew not that graceful language, and the soft melody of Italian airs, are too often deemed apologies for defective morality. She had been early taught to view disguised indelicacy and sophistical precepts with more alarm and indignation than open vice or avowed infidelity; for Mrs. Beauclerc possessed a deep knowledge of human nature, and was aware that the latter can only be prejudicial to the wicked, while the pure mind which would turn with blushing disgust from the one, may have the down of innocence brushed off by the other without being conscious of the injury.

From these somewhat unpleasing reflexions her attention was suddenly arrested by the portrait of an officer in uniform, and the strong

resemblance its manly features bore to those of Rosalind, when they last parted, convinced her she saw the picture of her father. Again, every former feeling revived, and she turned from the living canvas, to watch for the lovely being she had so long panted to embrace. She seated herself at one of the balconied windows in breathless impatience. Her heart beat high at the sound of every passing carriage, and when at length a chariot stopped at the door, she rushed from the window, and flew towards the stair case.

“Dearest Rosalind,” she cried, “oh, how long I have thought you!” She had scarcely finished this ardent apostrophy, when she saw, not Rosalind, but a tall elegant young man, whose finely-formed features were expressive of little less surprise than her own. Mortified and ashamed, she hastily drew back, while the stranger, bowing with graceful ease, followed her into the drawing-room.

“I presume I have the honour of seeing Miss Leycester,” said he, respectfully approaching her:—she bowed. “Miss Rosalind is not very punctual in the performance of her engagements,” said he, drawing himself a chair, with

the air of one who knew himself at home; “and a china auction is, I know, a scene of such temptation to her, that I should not wonder if she were entirely to forget an appointment to walk with me in the Park.”

Once more Felicia felt the same indefinite, yet unpleasing sensation. “Surely it was strange Rosalind should make so many engagements on the day she was expected from Leominster?” She had no time to pursue these meditations; a carriage stopped suddenly at the door—a tremendous rap again made the warm blood circle round her heart—a light step bounded up the staircase, and in a moment Rosalind was in her arms. She breathed quick, and a thousand fond recollections, a thousand tender regrets rushing to her remembrance, she was sinking, half-fainting on her bosom, when these emotions were instantaneously dispersed by Rosalind’s exclaiming, “Dear Felicia! You are so much improved, I should be quite jealous of you, if” (lowering her voice) “you were not already a matron in embryo. Give me leave to introduce my aunt, Lady Wyedale, and Lord Edgermond,” she continued, withdrawing from her embrace, and advancing

towards Felicia's former companion. "I fear I have made you wait, but we could not tear ourselves away before. There was the most divine assemblage of jars, vases, mandarins, &c. &c.; nothing, indeed, but the recollection that my sister would probably be waiting our return, could have impelled me to leave the scene of attraction."

"Then I am to have the *happiness* of inferring that your return was not at all accelerated by the idea that *I* also was likely to be in the same situation. Your engagement to walk in the park, was, it seems, entirely forgotten."

"Entirely—never once thought of," said she, with an assumed, yet playful carelessness, that contradicted the assertion.

There was something in Rosalind's gaiety of manner, and in the whole of her reception, that involuntarily chilled the first ardour of a heart like Felicia's, alive to the finest touches of feeling, and disposed at such a moment to expand with unusual energy. But Felicia had been for years so accustomed to invest her sister with all the attributes of earthly perfection, and picture her such as she wished her to be, that she could not tear the delusion from her senses.

Her heart also was warm and unsuspecting; and though the *beau-ideal*, which she had so long been embodying, had faded away, still the buoyancy of a youthful mind soon surmounted the temporary uneasiness which had attended her first meeting with her sister; and while Rosalind continued her sportive dialogue with his lordship, she forgot her transient mortification in listening to the archness of her *badinage*, in contemplating the exquisite loveliness of her matchless form and features.

The sprightly girl of fourteen, with golden hair waving over her open brows, eyes sparkling with youth and innocence, was now transformed into the finished model of feminine beauty. Health bloomed on her polished cheek, joy illumined each speaking feature, while the rich luxuriance of her light shining hair, as it clustered in native curls on her snowy forehead, admirably contrasted with the dark lustre of her eyes and mourning robe.

“Will you accompany us to the park, my dear Felicia?” said Rosalind, suddenly turning from Lord Edgermond. “I believe I must fulfil my promise, as his lordship will not release me from it.”

For a moment Felicia hesitated ; it was painful to be separated an instant from her sister, but a glance at Lord Edgermond's face betrayed he could dispense with her society. "He is her lover !" thought she, and she immediately declined the invitation.

When Rosalind's departure allowed her leisure to turn from the pleasing investigation of her captivating person, Felicia reviewed Lady Wyedale with new interest, and again repeated her sense of her Ladyship's kindness in affording her a shelter under her roof. The chain of feeling, which had been broken by Rosalind's vivacity, re-united, and tears gushed from her eyes while assuring her aunt she should now bestow on her and her sister that attachment which had hitherto been exclusively devoted to her first friend.

Lady Wyedale seemed to view her emotion with something like surprise, and received her protestations of affection with considerable coolness ; but Felicia was too assured of her love to distrust it, and too well remembered her former self-reproach to be disappointed at its not being expressed in the same energetic language in which she had clothed her own

sentiments; or accompanied by that sincerity of manner which so eminently distinguished Mrs. Beauclerc.

Lady Wyedale appeared about sixty; her stature was low, and her figure slight, even to spareness. Her eye dark, quick, and penetrating announced intellect, but betrayed at the same time a spirit restless, irritable, haughty, and vindictive. The acute lineaments of her face were sometimes relieved by a smile, but it was one of mingled import; and in defiance of her wish to love and esteem her aunt, ere their *tête-à-tête* ended, Felicia, with a half-suppressed sigh, permitted herself to apprehend she would never supply the place of Mrs. Beauclerc's kindness. She was not, however, disposed, on making this unpleasing observation, to believe her Ladyship must necessarily be very unamiable, or herself necessarily very miserable while her guest. She thought it natural an aunt from whom she had been so long estranged might not view her with any very strong feelings of regard; and certain that her residence with her could be but very short, felt resolved to endure with patience any little storms to which she might be exposed.

In Rosalind, she felt, she should be amply repaid for any disappointment she might experience in her aunt, and with renovated spirits she welcomed her return from her walk. Lord Edgermond was still her companion, and in Rosalind's heightened gaiety, as she announced that he would dine with them *en famille*, she saw a confirmation of her surmise that he was a favoured admirer, if not the accepted lover of her sister.

Lady Wyedale's evident approbation of his attentions she believed was the guarantee of his worth; and she scrutinized his personal claims to Rosalind's attachment, with that sort of interest we usually bestow on those whom circumstances have determined us to like.

His Lordship had not yet attained his twenty-seventh year: his features were handsome; his conversation animated, if not particularly brilliant, and his manners had that high polish which announces, yet more decidedly than a title, that the possessor is accustomed to move in the elevated circles of a court. He had, in short, all that exterior grace and refinement which sometimes supplies mental deficiency, and often atones to the world for the want of intrinsic worth—all

that lightness and gallantry—that self-possession and freedom of address, which, while it borders on well-bred assurance, is pardoned as emanating from polite condescension, or a generous open disposition; and Felicia, pre-determined to approve of Rosalind's selection, speedily endowed him with those virtues she wished him to possess.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Ah! who has power to say
To-morrow’s sun shall warmer glow,
And o’er this gloomy vale of woe
Diffuse a brighter ray ?

Ah! who is ever sure,
Though all that can the soul delight,
This hour enchants the wond’ring sight,
These raptures will endure?”

WHEN she retired for the night, she found Jenny, in her new capacity of waiting-woman, already in her apartment, busied in preparing her night things, and placing her clothes in the drawers.

“ You feel very strange like, don’t you Ma’am ?” said she, as Felicia began to undress. “ I’ve a notion, I shan’t be over comfortable with all that pack of sliving fellows below stairs, for a good bit to come ; and cliver as they seem to be, to my mind they’ve no notion of manners or good breeding. I can’t say I think it over and above civil to grin in a body’s face, when

they're strange like, nobody knows for what, but just because one is not used to all their fine ways. You must know, Miss Felicia," she continued, without allowing Felicia time to inquire her reasons for this preamble, had she been so disposed, "to show my good-will, I said to the chambermaid, you needn't, says I, Mrs. Martha (for all the servants are Misters and Mistresses here), be at no manner of trouble concerning Miss Felicia's room, for I'll make the windows and doors. Will you, says they? and set up a laugh. Why, are you a carpenter, Mrs. Jane? none but carpenters make windows and doors here. And all this scare it seems was, because I said make instead o' fasten; and there did I stare like a fool to see them make game on me till I took mysen off, none so well pleased, I'll assure you."

Felicia felt a little uneasy at this trifling circumstance, fearing it might be ominous of future disagreements; and ere she dismissed Jenny to rest, she desired her to keep as much as possible out of the servants hall, and be as sparing of her conversation as she well could, till more acquainted with their habits and characters.

Jenny promised obedience, in a tone that bespoke she would equally consult her own feelings, and her Mistress's, by distant civility; and Felicia, half apprehensive that the rustic appearance, and strong accent of her humble friend, might operate to her disadvantage, resolved to secure for her the good opinion and countenance of her sister. She was aware that Jenny, though a very sensible and shrewd woman, was not without those peculiarities of manner and idiom which might be likely to excite the ridicule of her present fashionable colleagues, and that, though inclined to all that is good, she had a quickness of feeling that rendered her rather too sensible of slight offences, and possessed a keenness of retort that might very possibly lead to unpleasant dialogues in the servants hall.

Lady Wyedale breakfasted in bed, and Felicia eagerly seized the opportunity to interest her sister in favour of the servant of her late aunt.

"My dear Rosalind," said she, as they sat down to the table, "I am going to bespeak your kindness and patronage for the companion of my journey. She is a most excellent woman, and after having faithfully discharged her duties

to my poor aunt for thirteen years, was by her recommended to my protection. You will believe this has given her a thousand claims to my regard; but even without it, I must ever have considered her with almost affection, for she was a girl when I was an infant, and though eight or nine years older than myself, I still remember the time when I looked up to her with the fondness which we feel for a play-fellow. I am sensible she is not without her faults, and that the dialect of her native county, Yorkshire, may sometimes afford room for risibility; but pray, my dear sister, exert your influence to check in her new associates whatever may tend to render her unhappy or displeased; for her chief failing is that irritability of temper, which, we are told, it is more difficult to overcome than to storm a city; and should her defects be too plainly pointed out to her, there will, I fear, be little harmony between her and the rest of the servants, which could not but be very unpleasant to my aunt."

"My maid told me last night she was a great quiz," returned Rosalind, laughing, "and I was anticipating some amusement from her jargon myself; but as you desire it, I will cer-

tainly endeavour to propitiate between them. Don't, however, make yourself uneasy about my aunt, she has too many quarrels of her own to render her a party in those of other people; and—Oh, mercy! Lord Edgermond is here before I have had time to take off my *robe de chambre*. Felicia, you must entertain him—but remember Evanmore.”

“I shall not be tempted to forget him,” said Felicia, smiling, “even by Lord Edgermond.”

“Oh, don't be too confident, for he is the ‘glass of fashion, and the mould of form:’ then he has *cet air distingué*, which confers ten thousand charms even upon a coronet.”

She darted through an opposite door as his Lordship entered, and Felicia, yet more assured of Rosalind's attachment to him, received him with augmented interest and regard.

Lord Edgermond was indeed well calculated to attract and please those who look not beyond personal accomplishments, and those whose innate innocence renders them inclined to believe all virtuous till they are compelled to see they are guilty. He possessed many of the fashionable acquirements of the day; had considerable knowledge of life, and sufficient *tact*

to discover with ease the prevailing foibles of his acquaintance. He had also that insinuating and flattering address which is so peculiarly fascinating to women; and his male friends pronounced him to have the best heart in the world; for he was seldom unnecessarily cruel to his dogs, horses, or dependents: betted when he had small chance of winning; lost his money without a frown, and had never been known to refuse a loan to those of his acquaintance to whom Plutus had been less propitious than himself. For the rest—it was nothing to them—nor in truth had they principle enough to perceive his want of it.

Such was the man on whom it appeared evident that the affections of Rosalind Leycester were bestowed; and unsuspecting of his real character, Felicia saw her attachment not only without apprehension, but with delight; for she had already determined that he must be amiable, or Rosalind would not have given him her heart; and in his Lordship's frequent visits, continual attentions, and half-whispered compliments, she saw her sister's love amply returned.

“I presume you are intimate with Mrs.

Berkely?" said Felicia, a few days after her arrival, taking as she spoke a sealed letter from her escritoire.

"Oh, no! merely acquainted," replied Rosalind.

"I thought she resided within two or three miles of Lady Wyedale's country seat; and I have a letter from my dear aunt Beauclerc, written almost in her last moments, which she charged me to deliver personally as soon as I had the opportunity. They were in early life particularly intimate, and though separated during a long series of years, my aunt always retained a most lively regard for her. I understood Lady Wyedale and she had also been old friends."

"They have long known each other, certainly; but that does not prove they must be friends. There may be intimacy without either confidence or esteem:—believe me it does not necessarily produce that which sentimental damsels call kindred souls, and of this truth Lady Wyedale and Mrs. Berkely are striking instances; for the oftener they meet, the less they appear to like each other; with them, in direct contradiction to its philosophical effect,

increased coldness seems, as a matter of course, to follow collision."

"I am concerned to hear it—What can be the occasion of their coolness?"

Why this is the simple fact: Mrs. Berkely is one of those astonishingly good people whom inferior mortals always view with mingled emotions of admiration, fear, and dislike. Lady Wyedale will not, indeed, own to any sentiment beyond antipathy: but her little person is usually in such a state of restlessness, and her irritable brow so cowed in her presence, that I see she never feels quite at ease till out of it."

"Then I fear my aunt will be averse to my visiting her?" said Felicia, to whom this hurried sketch of Mrs. Berkely had conveyed no unfavourable impression.

"No, I don't imagine she will care much about it. Besides, out of my sisterly regard, I will give you one little caution; if you try to please her you will be sure not to succeed. She is one of those variable capricious beings who are incensed at any want of respect, and yet abhor those who tamely yield to their humours. Sometimes, when I have a great point to carry deign to coax, but never, unless I see abso-

lute necessity for such condescension, which is not often the case. There are characters, and Lady Wyedale is one, with whom it is generally better policy to play the braggadocio than the suppliant. You have likewise so good a plea that you have no necessity to consult her on the subject. Therefore simply ask for the carriage, and go; for Mrs. Berkely fortunately happens to be in town. One of the young cygnets, her daughter, who is labouring under some pulmonary complaint, is here for the benefit of medical advice, and they are all with her in lodgings. By-the-by, I ought to give you some idea of the Misses Berkely, who are three of the most demure, prettiest behaved young ladies in the united kingdom, not forgetting the *nonpareil* of the family, John Berkely, and his attendant satellite in the shape of an unfortunate younger brother. *A-propos*, you must tell me what you think of John Berkely when you return, for once he was a sort of a Corydon of mine; but as another proof that intimacy does not always engender friendship, intercourse seemed to weaken our regard. I found him too good for me, and I dare say he discovered I was not good enough for him; so

after sentimentalizing, and playing about the flame, we each took wing, and flew away, with pinions unsinged : what I could ever see in the man is now my wonder ; for he is downright ugly—nothing decent about him but his two eyes, and their attraction lies neither in colour nor form. Then he is such a philosopher, that even at the very time I thought myself most secure of my conquest, I do not remember he ever said a single civil thing to me.”

“ As you think Lady Wyedale will not be displeased, go with me.”

“ Go with you !—no, not for the world. While I had Berkely in view I did occasionally contrive to drag on half an hour with them, but even then it was quite a *corvée* to get over the time, and of course I never afterwards voluntarily incurred such a bore. Besides I detest any thing in the shape of a *scène*, and you must be sensible the delivery of such a letter cannot fail to be attended with one, especially as the person receiving it is dear, good, Mrs. Berkely, whom I have often suspected to be a near relative of the *larmoyante* nymph so celebrated in times of old. Therefore, *bon jour*, *ma très chère sœur*, and be satisfied with seeing

four Niobes in Mrs. Berkely and her daughters, without adding a fifth in your own person ; for we are to have Lord Edgermond and a party in the evening, and I should wish *les graces et les ris* to attend your steps, even though your charms may rob me of the brightest jewel in my crown."

"Do not be alarmed," said Felicia smiling, "it would not be in my power to eclipse Rosalind Leycester, even should I wish to be her rival ; and as you reminded me the first hour we met, I am already a married woman in embryo."

Rosalind's cheek became flushed with transport ; and the kiss with which she repaid the compliment, evinced she was neither insensible to the sweets of flattery, nor that this tribute to her charms had diminished her sisterly regard for its author.

Felicia had, in truth, no pretension to vie with Rosalind for the palm of beauty. Her features were analogous to her mind, gentle, insinuating, intelligent, and lovely, but boasted not the perfection that distinguished her sister's, and, unlike her's, generally pleased more as they became more familiar to the eye.

The hint Rosalind had given of Lady Wyedale's temper, so well agreed with her own preconceived opinion, that Felicia confined herself to announcing she had a letter to convey to Mrs. Berkely, and accompanied the information by a request that she might be permitted to order the carriage for the purpose of waiting upon her.

Lady Wyedale was evidently provoked; but as she gave a sulky assent, Felicia readily overlooked the incivility in the permission, and the next morning set off for the residence of her aunt's friend.

Mrs. Berkely was in lodgings a few miles from town; and as there was no carriage entrance, Felicia alighted at the gate of the garden in front, and on foot reached the mansion. The door was open, and a servant appeared before she had time to lift the knocker. He answered her inquiry for Mrs. Berkely by saying the family were all at home, and without further ceremony led her up stairs. As she approached the drawing-room, she caught the sound of a female voice particularly soft and musical, reading aloud; and when her conductor threw open the door of a large hand-

some apartment, she saw that it proceeded from a dignified elderly woman, dressed in mourning, whose gentle features well harmonized with the sweet tones she had heard. Three elegant looking girls were seated by her at work; and writing at a table, near one of the windows, was a young man, in whose plain yet agreeable countenance, she felt assured she beheld John Berkely.

Mrs. Berkely hastily arose on hearing her name announced, and advanced to meet her with a smile of joy, grief, and interest, that evinced she was not wholly unprepared for this visit, or considered Felicia in the light of a stranger. She received Mrs. Beauclerc's letter with deep emotion; but it was betrayed only by her changing complexion, and tremulous hand as she placed it on the table, for she evidently tried to conquer her agitation, and did not open it during Felicia's stay.

"I shall hope to know more of you, my dear Miss Leycester," said she, "when you accompany Lady Wyedale to the Lodge, which is only three miles from Elm-grove, and while you remain in town, shall be most happy to see you whenever you can find leisure to favour us

with your company. But I do not press you to visit us here. London has many attractions for a young imagination ; and we lead so retired a life, partly from inclination, and partly from the indisposition of my youngest daughter, that I should deem it almost selfish to request you to pass a day with us."

There was a something in Mrs. Berkely that involuntarily inspired respect in all who beheld her, while her mild manners and pleasing address seldom failed to excite attachment in those who were not determined to dislike her ; and Felicia, prepared to love and esteem the friend of her aunt, felt every previous prepossession strengthened by acquaintance. She earnestly requested to be allowed to repeat her visit shortly ; and, pleased with her apparent wish to cultivate her friendship, Mrs. Berkely readily named a day in the ensuing week.

" I shall consider myself still more favoured if your sister, Miss Rosalind, will accompany you, Miss Leycester," said Mrs. Berkely, as Felicia rose to depart. " A year or two ago she often indulged me with her society, and her vivacity inspired us all with additional cheerfulness ; but lately she has seldom given us the

pleasure of her company. And pray tell her John will be rejoiced to renew the playful contests and arguments which formerly used to afford us so much amusement."

Felicia stole a glance at Mr. Berkely while his mother was speaking, to see if he still retained that affection for Rosalind which she hinted he had once felt; but whatever might have been his sentiments, his tranquil brow, unflushed cheek, and careless indifference to what his mother was saying, announced he was entirely free from her chains: and when she recollected Rosalind's flippant manners, and disregard to the ceremonial of life, she could scarcely believe a man of his grave character and deportment, could ever seriously have regarded her with attachment.

CHAPTER VII.

“ I never fram’d a wish, or form’d a plan
That flatter’d me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But thou wert there.”

“ SURELY, Rosalind, you will accompany me to Mrs. Berkely’s to-day ?” said Felicia on the morning of her intended visit.

“ Who, I ? Oh no, my dear, I consider such acts of immolation quite above my standard. No, no ; you must, as I told you before, go to dear, good, sententious Mrs. Berkely’s stitching party by yourself. Don’t look so disappointed—you must, by this time, have discovered I am not fit society for such paragons as the Berkelys. While I thought Berkely might have been converted into a reasonable man, I did not spare my company ; but I found the thing hopeless, and I almost think that has partly given me such a distaste to your wonderfully pious, prudent folks. It is indeed a

sad bore to be in the least intimate with them ; for as ‘ every animal employs the note, or cry, ‘ or howl which is peculiar to its species,’ they are sure to presume upon it, to torment you with their unsolicited advice and *experience*, as they term all sort of hum-drum sleep-giving tales. Then it is so tiresome and provoking to those who are not of the fraternity, to hear them say, when I was young I never did so and so : or, young people in my day never would have thought of such a thing, &c. &c. Now one is not inclined to give them credit for so much perfection then, seeing they are so far from the goal now ; or at least one cannot help grieving, that so much blossom should have produced so little fruit ; and as it would be treason to appear sceptical, it is best not to run the risk of giving offence to them, or of losing one’s own temper.”

After this decided explanation of her sentiments, Felicia forbore to press Rosalind to accompany her. She had, indeed, as Rosalind imagined, seen, with surprise and concern, that she possessed a mind which bore little affinity to her’s, and inclinations, pursuits, and opinions very different from those she assiduously che-

rished in her own bosom. But while she saw her errors, she esteemed them those of an improper education, united to a light heart and volatile spirit; and pity mingling with regret, her disappointment was succeeded by augmented attachment.

Mrs. Berkely received her confused apologies for Rosalind's absence, with a manner that showed she both understood, and could forgive the real motive. The conversation then took a different turn, and in the society of Mrs. Berkely and her family Felicia spent the first uninterruptedly happy day she had passed for months. In vain she sought to discover in Rosalind's exaggerated description of the Berkely family any resemblance to the original. A shade of pensiveness at times interrupted the peaceful serenity on Mrs. Berkely's brow; but it seldom dwelt longer than a moment; and as she was a widow, and one of her daughters labouring under a painful indisposition, Felicia only wondered that she could enter with so much ease and cheerfulness into the pursuits and conversation of her children. The Miss Berkelys, scarcely excepting the invalid, seemed gifted with little less animation than

Rosalind herself; while Mr. Berkely, though naturally reserved in his manners, soon threw off his apparent distance, and gaily lent his aid to enliven the little party.

Felicia had believed, that when united to her sister, she should know no uneasiness but such as might arise from the tender regret with which she must ever regard the loss of Mrs. Beauclerc; and, when mixing in the polished society of Lady Wyedale, she should derive the highest gratification and improvement from the conversation which she should hear at her table; but a very little intercourse with Rosalind and her aunt dispelled the blissful illusion, and some of the brilliant colours in which the sanguine imagination of a young and ardent mind decks an untried world, had already faded before her eyes. Even her devoted attachment to Rosalind could not hide from her, that, though she was smart, lively, and affectionate, her conversation consisted of little more than highly-drawn caricatures of her acquaintance; regrets that she had missed one amusement; descriptions of a past, or anticipations of a future one, varied by perpetual arguments and polite *fracas* with her aunt.

That openness, that sincerity of affection, that mutual confidence and mutual desire to please, which form the principal charm of domestic intercourse, and which seemed enjoyed in all its purity by the Berkelys, she had long vainly sought for under the roof of Lady Wyedale. There she had been taught, that good manners are not modified by the customs of any circle or place, nor politeness exclusively the attribute of high life; and speedily discovered that a Xantippe in a drawing-room is not much more distinguished for the graces than that vehement personage sometimes seen presiding at a fish-stall.

Lady Wyedale's spirit was so haughty, that to disagree with her in opinion was synonymous to an insult, and her manner so peremptory, that reason was usually lost in declamation. Her conversation was at times indicative of talent; but whenever her passions or interest interfered with her judgment, her arguments became trifling and absurd.

In a snip-snap dialogue she was no mean performer; but Rosalind stood unrivalled. She excelled in *persiflage*, for her volatile fancy supplied her with a thousand retorts and innuendos;

and she could throw an arch kind of simplicity into her face and tones at such periods, that rendered the keenness of her replies particularly exasperating to her antagonist, who generally kept the field till she found herself defeated, and then retreated under the authority of the aunt—the consequence of which was, that Rosalind felt equally assured of her victory, and enraged at the assumption of power in one who first voluntarily put herself on a level, and then insisted upon the superiority derived from her age and station.

Felicia had, at first, witnessed Rosalind's behaviour on these occasions with equal astonishment and displeasure; for not merely esteeming Mrs. Beauclerc as the best of women, and loving her as the kindest—but considering her as the guardian of her youth, she had ever preserved towards her the familiarity of a friend, mingled with the reverence due to a superior; and after she had perceived Lady Wyedale's total want of self-command, gentleness, and all the varied charms which inspire sentiments of respect, she still could not exonerate Rosalind from a heavy censure. But again it was softened by the recollection

that she had not, like herself, been taught the duties of her situation by precept and example; and she regarded with increased admiration the undeviating piety, the inflexible integrity, the feminine virtues that graced the character of her first protectress.

Felicia came by appointment very early, but the dinner-bell rung ere she thought she had been an hour in the house.

“My dear Berkely!” said Mrs. Berkely, as they rose to descend into the eating-room.

Mr. Berkely put down the artificial flies he was busily employed in manufacturing, and while a blush suffused his manly face, advanced towards his youngest sister, and gently took her in his arms.

“My poor Maria has long been unable to walk up or down stairs,” said Mrs. Berkely, as she took Felicia’s hand to lead her into the dining-room, “but her brother is so kind and constant an assistant, she says she scarcely knows how to repine at the deprivation.”

Felicia involuntarily turned towards him a look expressive of her esteem. His sister’s arms were clasped around his neck, and the silent kiss she imprinted on his cheek, as a tear

stole from her down-cast eyes, spoke more than volumes.

All the little offices which suffering nature requires, it is so manifestly the duty of woman to administer, that we see any negligence in their performance with disgust. In her, compassion seems scarcely a virtue, and we esteem the least apparent want of it a crime for which we can offer no apology. But we view either its possession, or its absence in the character of the sterner sex with very different emotions. In man we are not taught to expect all the nicer feelings of humanity, all those little tender attentions which sickness requires; and when we receive them from the hand of a father, husband, or brother, we prize them as jewels for which we can make no adequate return.

Felicia felt extremely affected, and as she viewed Mr. Berkely's anxious endeavours to avoid shaking his lovely burthen, the looks of fond solicitude with which he regarded her, she breathed a heartfelt sigh, that her beloved Rosalind had failed to secure the valuable affections of such a man.

Women soon become familiar. There is a similarity in their pursuits which naturally

leads to intimacy ; and when there is also a coincidence in their sentiments, friendship rapidly follows acquaintance. Each succeeding moment seemed to strengthen her attachment to the family, while the maternal kindness of Mrs. Berkely's manner, and the affectionate freedom of her daughters, evinced that she was no less warmly esteemed by them.

Felicia was not, indeed, like Rosalind, a finished belle, but she had *les graces encore plus belles que la beauté*. She had also that diffidence of manner, which Mrs. Berkely knew is often found to veil a superior mind and cultivated understanding ; and she almost regretted that the approaching union of her young favourite, which she had learnt from Mrs. Beauclerc's letter would, in all human probability, separate them for ever in this world.

It was late when Felicia at length reluctantly tore herself away, and then only after having promised to repeat her visit very shortly.

The breakfast equipage had scarcely been taken away the morning afterwards, and she was endeavouring to remove Rosalind's prejudices against her friends, when the rap of consequence made them start. Rosalind flew

to the window, and as she peeped through the venetian blinds exclaimed,

Oh, heavens! what shall we do? Why that most insufferable of all insufferables, Mrs. Hustleton, is at the door—I will not admit her, I am determined. She is come on purpose to overwhelm you with questions; and after gratifying her own horrid curiosity, she will run all over the town with her intelligence: for she is a sort of news-providing jackal to half a dozen genteel people, who merely tolerate her as such. But perhaps we had best brave her at once—she will find some means of satisfying herself after all—it is a rainy morning—I don't think Lord Edgermond will call, and she might chance to come when she would be even less agreeable than now, for she is as mischievous and malicious as a monkey."

At this moment a footman entered, to *know if she would be at home?*

"Why, yes," in a tone of mortification, "you may as well let her in. Felicia," she continued, "if you don't play *personnage muet*, I will never forgive you. She will endeavour to come over you in fifty different ways, and pretend to have been the intimate friend of my

aunt Beauclerc, partly to draw you on, and partly to gratify her own vanity, though she was, I dare say, never half-a-dozen times in her company: but don't be deluded."

A low unpleasing looking woman, with a cringing smile on her lips, now entered the room.

"My dear Miss Leycester," said she, taking Rosalind's motionless hand with the fawning manner of a spaniel, "how kind to receive me thus early! but indeed I deserve it; for as soon as I learnt Miss Leycester, your sister, was arrived, I felt impatient to pay my respects to her."

"I do not doubt it, Ma'am," said Rosalind, in a tone that made Felicia start, while her smile was that of a person obliged by the compliment.

"May I beg to know which of my dear young friends I must term *Miss* Leycester. I am sorry to be so ignorant of those for whom I entertain so great a regard."

"My sister is the eldest," said Rosalind, forgetful in her desire to be young, that she had answered the first question of her impertinent visitor.

“I only learnt your arrival last night, my dear Madam,” addressing Felicia, “and it was an unexpected pleasure, I assure you, for your aunt did not, I believe, hope for your society so soon. I trust you are recovered from the fatigue of your journey.”

An arch side-long look from Rosalind informed Felicia that she had, anticipating this visit, contrived to deceive Mrs. Hustleton as to the period of her leaving Leominster, and with some hesitation she said she had been in town nearly three weeks.

Mrs. Hustleton appeared petrified. “Three weeks! really I am surprised—Miss Rosalind—you”—

“The exact time of my sister’s visit was uncertain,” replied Rosalind coolly, “and I did not permit myself to anticipate her appearance, lest I should incur a disappointment.”

Mrs. Hustleton looked rather sceptical, but she had some great points to achieve; and suppressing her angry suspicions, she turned to Felicia. “Were you ever in London before, my dear Miss Leycester?”

This was so direct and harmless an interrogation, that Felicia readily replied in the negative

“What a delightful scene it will be to you, when you can so far forget my respected old friend, Mrs. Beauclerc, as to enter into its gaieties,” said she with a whine. “Perhaps, my dear young lady,” she continued, edging her chair a little nearer to Felicia, “you do not remember to have heard your aunt mention me?”

“No,” said Rosalind, with easy self-possession. “Felicia has just been telling me my aunt Beauclerc never alluded to your having met.”

“Indeed—Ah! it is so many years since I had the pleasure of her friendship, I am not surprised.”

She looked, however, mortified, and some minutes elapsed before she had sufficiently recovered from this unwelcome reply to resume the conversation with spirit.

“Your aunt, Miss Leycester, I dare say had almost entirely relinquished society for many years before her illness. She was always inclined to be grave.”

“Oh no,” said Rosalind, “on the contrary, she was distinguished for her cheerfulness, and had a numerous circle of acquaintance.”

“Doubtless; I remember she was always lively in her disposition: I merely meant to say, that my old friend probably declined the amusements of the world as she verged towards its close.”

“My aunt seldom partook of what are usually termed the amusements of the world;” said Felicia.

An approving glance from Rosalind was the reward of her dexterity in evading a direct reply.

“I think the largest portion of Mrs. Beauclerc’s fortune was entailed on the male representative of the family, whom I have long had the honour of knowing.”

“Then you are more fortunate than ourselves. Lord Beauclerc is a stranger to us,” said Rosalind, who was constantly on the alert to parry her attacks, or answer them with information to which she was already privy.

“Was my esteemed friend aware of the dangerous tendency of her complaint, dear Miss Leycester?”

Felicia coldly bowed.

“Long enough to make all those little preparations which are so necessary—yet so awful?”

Felicia turned from her inquisitive gaze with ill-dissembled displeasure.

“ You will excuse my saying these topics are a little distressing to my sister—you know my aunt Beauclerc was to her a mother,” said Rosalind, with a glowing cheek.

“ A thousand pardons my dear Miss Leicester. I lament that my natural desire to hear every particular respecting the friend of my youth should have tended to wound your sensibility. I know she was indeed a parent to you, and pardon me if my anxiety should have betrayed me into any thing like indelicacy. From a near relative I learnt her indisposition was one that does not rob us of the opportunity of fulfilling our last wishes; and the deep interest I take in whatever concerns my dear Lady Wyedale’s family must be my apology, if there be any impropriety in expressing my unfeigned hope that she did indeed regard you, my dear Madam, as her adopted daughter.”

Her eye wandered from Felicia’s face to Rosalind’s, then back again to Felicia’s; but vainly : they remained silent, and not a feature betrayed the intelligence she was desirous of possessing.

An acquaintance newly commenced with a very distant branch of the Beauclerc family, who felt anxious to learn the particulars of Mrs. Honoria's will, determined her, however, not as yet to relinquish the attempt in despair; and by a masterly stroke of policy, she succeeded. "You, my dear Miss Rosalind, the acknowledged heiress of Lady Wyedale, she would not of course consider on such an occasion; and I am sure, you would not feel hurt at a line of conduct which the consciousness of your great expectations, not want of *affection*, alone impelled your aunt to adopt."

The desire of appearing independent absorbed Rosalind's prudence, and forgetful of her former resolution, she revealed that piece of intelligence which Mrs. Hustleton was most anxious to acquire. She was instantly sensible of her inadvertence, and would have wished to recall the past, or, by altering her first statement, a little disguise the truth. But she had no opportunity to effect her design.

Mrs. Hustleton had penetration enough to perceive it was not her intention, by protracting the conversation, to further enlighten her mind; and eager to communicate the important in-

formation she had collected, she resisted all Rosalind's invitations to prolong her call.

"When she opens her budget to take out what she has thus artfully drawn from me," said Rosalind, ere the door had well closed after her, "may all the plagues of Pandora fly after it. You have cause to triumph over me, indeed Felicia, for after all my cautions to you, and fears of your garrulity, I alone have betrayed what was of the *least* importance to be concealed. Well, I shall not long be in her debt; and yet, she is not a woman I would willingly offend, and from the same motive that influenced Justice Shallow to treat Sir John Falstaff's men well, "*because they were arrant knaves and would backbite.*" Low and despicable as she is, and almost universally detested, she has attached herself to half a dozen genteel people whose gratitude is secured by her compliance with their whims; and is connected with half a dozen more by the still stronger ties of interest: for she has twelve or fifteen thousand pounds, to leave amongst twelve or fifteen avaricious cousins all equally related; and the hope of securing her better part hereafter, a lure artfully held out to each in succession,

secures their countenance and opinion, though I verily believe, there is not one of them who does not cordially detest her as I do."

"And why should she be the object of your aversion?"

"Why!—because I never can see hypocrisy, malice, envy, and every other bad passion in full play, without indignation. Then her insolence, self-conceit, and vanity, are perpetually exciting one's disgust, and displeasure. In addition to her other high crimes and misdemeanors, she is that most horribly tiresome and disagreeable of all personages, a mighty clever notable woman—a director general, in short, of the affairs, conduct, and opinions of the whole world; and authorised, on the ground of her own superior understanding, to judge and condemn all criminals who happen to disagree with her, from matters of faith down to the tying of a shoe-string. Then every thing belonging to her, is superior in its kind. Her foreign wines have a flavour which no one's else possess; and must, therefore, have been made expressly for her. Her English, manufactured from receipts given her by some great acquaintance (who would not for the universe

extend the favour to any other), though made *exactly* according to rule, nevertheless turn out so much better than any ever before tasted, that it can be nothing short of a miracle. Her cakes, fricassées, tea, coffee, all—all partake of this marvellous excellence. She has receipts that would make the fortunes of half the wine-merchants, wine-manufacturers, confectioners, cooks, gingerbread-makers and bakers in the kingdom, if she would only charitably impart them. All the books that should be read, she has read; all that should be acquired, or known, she has acquired, and does know. Then all her relations to the remotest degree of consanguinity (that is, acknowledged consanguinity), are handsome, accomplished, clever, genteel, well-born, affluent, and so forth. Now, if all this proceeded from a natural sweetness of disposition, a desire to view every thing through a happy medium, a warmth of heart and sincerity of affection, that inclined her to invest all her friends with these attributes of fancied perfection, I could forgive it, and even love the weakness I despised. Knowing that it emanates from a haughty insolent spirit—that it is the fruit of pride and self love—I see her thus en-

tranced by the vapours of her own consummate presumption with unmixed sensations of abhorrence. One of her many recommendations to the love of society is, that she is a sort of a ready-made anecdote-monger, and piques herself on knowing the marriages and intermarriages of every genteel family in the kingdom, with whom she also labours hard to make you believe she is on terms of intimacy; and with as much truth as the gentleman I just before quoted, Justice Shallow, when boasting of his familiarity with John of Gaunt, whom he never saw but once in a tilt-yard; and then received a broken head from him for crouding among the marshal's men. If you happen to say Mr. Ridewell's eye was knocked out whilst breaking in a horse, she begins with an important movement of her head, "No ma'am, there you must excuse me, I have the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with the family, and I know from sources not in the possession of every body, &c. &c. &c. And I assure you it occurred so and so." But what of all things is most annoying, she every now and then assumes that smooth, condescending politeness, which a superior adopts to one of an inferior degree,

when disposed to be amiable; while her conversation is distinguished by a cool, yet decided confidence, which implies a superiority of information and situation, which admits of neither doubt nor appeal. This, from one whose husband was absolutely in the lowest station of life, and who was herself in the greatest obscurity till, like *Danaë*, a shower of gold unexpectedly fell into her lap by the death of a distant relative, is beyond measure mortifying; because her family consequence, even before its lustre was sullied by the tarnish of such a marriage, was not higher than that of ninety-nine others, over whom she exercises these petty airs of self-created importance. Yet to question her supremacy is to incur her eternal maledictions. Oh! save me, I say, from the everlasting pride, envy, malice, and folly of a little, grovelling, narrow soul; from the tenacious importance of a low-bred conceited woman.

“Yet really there is some excuse for such characters, for even sensible people are often gulled by a dictatorial manner, and unshaken self-confidence, into a belief that there must be some ground for consequence so sturdily maintained; and that the most common-place

observations, when delivered as if they were profound aphorisms, must contain more than mere every-day remarks."

There was a something so artful, so sly, and so altogether unprepossessing in Mrs. Hustleton's manner, that when Rosalind had finished this *catalogue raisonné*, of her claims to the esteem and regard of her acquaintance, Felicia, though apprehensive she had a little tendency to deal in hyperbole, felt inclined to believe her animadversions were not altogether unfounded; and, fearful that her volatility laid her open to the malevolence of such a woman, she entreated her to disguise her dislike lest she might convert a disagreeable acquaintance into a dangerous enemy.

Rosalind heard her with a laugh, and promised obedience to her wishes. Between herself and Mrs. Hustleton there did indeed exist a sort of treaty offensive, and defensive; which each felt aware it was her interest not to interrupt by an open avowal of that heart-felt antipathy, which a series of petty acts of insolence on the one side, and impertinent speeches on the other, had engendered between them. Mrs. Hustleton had an instinctive apprehension, that

Rosalind had somewhere learnt her former state and condition (a momentous secret), carefully hidden by herself and her relations, from the same personal motive; while Rosalind, in defiance of her usual disregard to consequences, was unwilling to have a complete rupture with a woman who visited in the first circles, and who had talent enough to second the malevolence of her temper.

CHAPTER VIII.

A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharp corrosion ;
A temper, passionate, and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion.

Cooper.

LADY Wyedale's annual visit to her seat in Essex had been delayed long beyond the usual period, in consequence of a slight indisposition in the early part of the summer, which operating on a constitution too irritable to endure the least personal suffering with common patience, had at length become if not alarming, at least very distressing. Unaccustomed to submit to the least privation, or support the smallest inconvenience, her Ladyship's native ill-humour was so much increased, that her attendants approached her with fear, while her associates fled from her with disgust. Even the presence of Mr. Evanmore, who was now in town, and a

frequent visitor, could not restrain the ebullitions of her temper. He was not, indeed, a personage of sufficient importance in her eyes to render her at all desirous of conciliating his good opinion; for his connexions, though genteel, were by no means affluent, and his fortune she considered scarcely equal to the support of his station. As the accepted lover of Felicia she had at first seen him with dislike, but his mild gentlemanly manners, quiet attentions, and patient endurance of her caprices, and complaints, at length gradually won upon her; and as a person always ready to listen to her various calamities, she began to view him with something like complacency. But the strongest claim to her civility arose from the idea that he would soon relieve her from the presence of Felicia, who in vain endeavoured to acquire even that slender share of regard which she had bestowed upon him.

Towards the whole race of the Beauclercs she entertained an implacable antipathy. If she had even sincerely loved any thing but herself, it was her brother, Major Leycester, and the neglect with which he had been treated by Mrs. Leycester's family still rankled at her

heart. The kindness he had received from Mrs. Honoria might perhaps have effected some alteration in her favour ; but she resented her determination not to relinquish her claim to Felicia when, at the death of Mrs. Leycester, she had requested that she also might be resigned to her guardianship. She knew that her brother secretly lamented that any child of his should owe its support to a Beauclerc, and her own family pride equally revolted from the idea.

Mrs. Beauclerc's high character, literary attainments, and pious disposition, operated yet more to increase this feeling of antipathy.

Lady Wyedale was one of those persons who esteem it a proof of an enlarged mind, and liberal ideas, to regard with indifference those splendid promises of future glory, which are the only support of the sorrowful—the brightener of the bosom of misery. But her Ladyship, like many other modern philosophers, was of opinion that religion is a good political engine to keep in order the poor ; and she exacted from all her dependents the most scrupulous discharge of the duties of morality. She went to church generally once a day ; and when neither her

feelings nor her interest were concerned, seldom materially erred. But she was too much absorbed in the pleasures and pursuits of this world to contemplate a future without dismay; and possessed a heart as incapable of being influenced by the pure spirit of christianity, as her mind was unable to maintain a just equilibrium upon any subject in opposition to her wishes. Her understanding, indeed, often poised the scale; but her passions decided the balance. Judging Mrs. Beauclerc by the common rule of self, she believed Felicia must have been taught to despise her; and when her unceasing attentions, unwearied patience, and unassuming deportment compelled her unwillingly to acknowledge that she was very different from what she had expected, her prejudices were too firmly rooted to admit of her regarding her with any thing like affection. That piety was her predominant principle she had penetration to perceive; and though it was of so unostentatious a character that it was manifested by actions, rather than language, she could feel no affinity towards one whose sentiments were so little in unison with her own.

It is not difficult to discover perfections when

we are anxiously looking for them, or errors in those we wish to have a pretence for disliking; and in Felicia's tranquil brow, easy disposition, and undeviating performance of all the little duties of her station, she saw a cold heart—affected stoicism—and mistaken bigotry.

The continual and mortifying distinctions Lady Wyedale delighted to make between Rosalind and herself, Felicia bore with unshaken sweetness: but often blushed that Evanmore should be the witness to those gusts of passion which so frequently deformed the countenance of her aunt; nor, while she assiduously endeavoured to sooth her angry passions to rest, or administer to her sufferings, could she sometimes avoid drawing a comparison between her and the friend whose heavy loss she had each day more reason to deplore.

While labouring under a hopeless and painful disease, during months of the acutest anguish, she had wiped from Mrs. Beauclerc's eye the tear which tortured nature will sometimes shed, or chased from her brow the big drops of agony; but no impatient expression, no hasty exclamation, no half-uttered reproach against her Maker, had ever been wrung from

her lips. A low-breathed prayer, a convulsive compression of the mouth, alone had betrayed the corporeal anguish she endured ; and seldom did she close the day without affectionately thanking her attendants for their attention, and regretting that her prolonged illness deprived them of the innocent enjoyments of life. Lady Wyedale on the contrary never thought that she was treated with sufficient tenderness ; though evidently slightly indisposed, she continually interrupted the tranquillity of all around her by the most querulous complaints, or disturbed the hour of happiness by the most capricious ill humour ; and, after having broken the harmony of the whole family, thought she had offered a sufficient apology when she sometimes condescended to ascribe her petulance to her state of health, or the fastidious delicacy of a mind that revolted from any thing like inattention or neglect.

Though he bore all her Ladyship's humours with the utmost politeness and apparent indifference, Evanmore could not help thinking her intolerably tiresome and disagreeable, or avoid feeling displeasure at her unkindness to his beloved Felicia. But he soon learnt to consi-

der her in the light of a grown baby, and viewed her with the same feelings with which we contemplate a spoilt child, whose humours we try to coax, because till it is soothed we can have no enjoyment ourselves. With his intended sister-in-law he was delighted: she was beautiful, fashionable, and *piquante*; and from her vivacity, gay good-humour, and ready retorts to Lady Wyedale's attacks, he derived a fund of amusement. Yet it was not the point of Rosalind's remarks that recommended them, so much as the play of the most lovely attractive features, the arch smile that dwelt on the sweetest lips which nature, in her most propitious movements, ever formed. But Evanmore did not attempt to analyze the exact cause of his admiration; and Rosalind, gratified by his applause, soon learnt to treat him with the easy familiarity of a brother.

Vanity was, indeed, Rosalind's besetting sin, and flirting her favourite employment. She was a practised coquette, and her prominent passion influenced every look, every motion, every expression. She was all things to all men: alternately bewitchingly soft, pensively sentimental, or sparkling with animation. She possessed many accomplishments, and excelled

in all the little arts of ingenious idleness; but to embellish her person was her chief study; to attract, her principal aim.

Lady Wyedale was one of those narrow minded suspicious characters, who think their own personal safety lies in the disunion of all around them; and that, to maintain their own power, they must prevent any thing like confidence or real affection between the rest of their connexions. "Divide and govern," the favourite maxim of cold worldly policy, was her rule of conduct; and, though she had no desire to see Rosalind and Felicia so much at variance, that it would either be unpleasant to live with them, or their quarrels become the topic of conversation among her acquaintance, she was determined to destroy any thing like attachment on either side, lest it might lead to the downfall of her own consequence with both. She had a large fortune at her disposal; and though she had not the slightest intention of leaving Felicia more than a few thousands, she was not unwilling to alarm Rosalind's security; or to receive those personal attentions from both which are so gratifying to an ambitious, power-loving spirit. She therefore laboured hard, by

hints and innuendos, to persuade Rosalind, that she would find her sister a sour, bigotted, artful woman; ready to take every advantage of her thoughtlessness, and willing to ascribe the worst motives to her conduct. To Felicia she occasionally lamented, in broken sentences and half-breathed sighs, that Rosalind's beauty and desire of admiration, imprudence, and fascinating manners, made her a very dangerous friend to an engaged woman. These efforts were not, however, attended with all the success she could wish. Rosalind, at first disposed to regard Felicia with fear and coldness, soon learnt to forget many of the unfavourable impressions she had received, in Felicia's cheerful conversation, unassuming manners, and affectionate attentions. She remembered enough to make her insensible to Felicia's advice, and laugh at her principles; but not sufficient to render her an object of secret dislike; or extinguish the ardent affection she had in childhood felt for her. While Felicia, whose ready penetration enabled her to perceive Lady Wyedale's intention, and whose attachment to her sister rendered her blind to her faults, spurned from her mind, as injurious and uncharitable,

every hint to her disadvantage, and continued to treat her with the fond warmth of one who could place all she esteemed precious, without hesitation, in her hands.

Artless, open, and confiding, she saw Rosalind's efforts to excite the approbation of Evanmore, as those of a sister endeavouring to awaken the affections of a brother. No parity of manners, sentiments, or pursuits, she felt assured, could impel Rosalind towards Evanmore, and those arts of coquetry which she sometimes saw her practise, she ascribed, and justly, to a passion for universal admiration. Her heart she yet implicitly believed was in the possession of Lord Edgermond; but three months acquaintance with his Lordship had not tended to confirm her former opinion that he seriously returned her affection. She had vainly tried, through the brilliant gloss diffused by fashion over the manners and language of his Lordship, to discover any sparklings of real attachment. He was still almost her shadow; still whispered in her ear; still assumed the air of one who loves; but he never seemed to advance a step in his attentions. He was the same yesterday as to-day: to-day the same as

yesterday; and as he possessed, in Felicia's humble views, a princely fortune, she knew not why he should delay a declaration of his love, if it really dwelt in his bosom. She saw also that Rosalind was secretly disappointed at his cautious advance towards the temple of Hymen, though she carefully abstained from breathing her mortification.

A childish desire of universal conquest was, as Felicia rightly conjectured, the sole cause of Rosalind's attentions to Evanmore, and her heart more interested in Lord Edgermond's favour than that of any other. But the heart of a coquette is never in any great danger; and though the blind urchin may sometimes produce a little sensation, like that of feeling, the impression is neither very deep nor very lasting. Rosalind would as soon have thought of marrying a beggar as Evanmore; but it was not in her nature to be in his society, or that of any other gentleman, without trying the power of her spells. He was handsome, elegant, and good-humoured; and though, as she often told him, flirting with a sister's lover was heavy work, yet it was better than not flirting at all; and with this understanding between them, she

continued to demand attentions, he to pay, and Felicia to witness them without apprehension.

London was now, to use the emphatic language of fashionable people, “a perfect desert—a complete wilderness.” Lord Edgermond was gone with his family to Brighton, and Rosalind became suddenly convinced nothing would so much contribute to her aunt’s restoration to health as a visit to the sea. Lady Wyedale had herself long been wavering between a desire to change her abode, and an indolent unwillingness to make the attempt; and she at length yielded to the unceasing arguments and entreaties of her favourite niece. In defiance of their frequent bickerings and clashings, Lady Wyedale really loved Rosalind, as much as her selfish heart was capable of loving any thing. She decidedly resembled both Major Leycester and herself, who had been twins; and all that mysterious, yet strong and tender attachment which is supposed to exist between persons so singularly united, had not been a little increased by their having each formed a connexion in life, which placed them far above the rest of their friends.

In Rosalind's exquisite beauty and captivating manners, she saw the newly-acquired consequence of her family perpetuated ; and confident that she would form some splendid alliance, vanity, as well as affection, contributed to give her importance in her eyes.

Aware that her aunt's resolves, unlike those of the Medes and Persians, were liable to change, Rosalind instantly wrote to a lady then at Brighton, and requested her to secure Lady Wyedale a house without delay.

CHAPTER IX.

“ She who in secret yields her heart,
Again may claim it from her lover ;
But she who plays the trifler’s part,
Can ne’er her squander’d fame recover.”

THE busy haste of idle people, the restless impatience of those who have nothing to do, is proverbial ; and a common observer might have supposed, when viewing Lady Wyedale’s and Rosalind’s eager countenances, hearing their hasty orders, and seeing their perpetual motion, that they were doing something more than merely deciding upon what clothes they would take ; directing how they should be packed ; or speculating on the advantages of the new road to Brighton.

The evening previous to their intended departure, Felicia determined to pay a farewell visit to the Berkelys : they were yet in town,

and her only regret on leaving London arose from her reluctance to lose their society.

An intercourse begun so auspiciously, time had ripened into friendship, and every succeeding visit tended to confirm Felicia in the favourable sentiments she cherished towards them.

It has been justly observed, that men can talk of the object of their affections, find a pleasure in dwelling upon their passion, and in describing those charms and virtues which have excited their attachment; but woman shrinks instinctively from the avowal of her love.

Often had Felicia, since Mr. Evanmore's visit, wished to confide to the maternal bosom of Mrs. Berkely the secret of her engagement, and mention the name dearest to her ear; but whenever she tried to begin the subject, her words died away, and a blush alone betrayed something was labouring at the heart. Silence now seemed treason against friendship; and by requesting Evanmore to accompany her in her walk, she thought she should confirm what, she doubted not, Mrs. Berkely had already learnt from report. Evanmore willingly consented to

be her companion, in defiance of Rosalind's laughter at the idea of his going like a captive in chains to be exhibited to his mistress's fastidious friends.

Mr. Berkely received them alone. He appeared scarcely less embarrassed than the confused Felicia, who had not anticipated that the first person to whom she should introduce her lover would be Mr. Berkely. A variety of small packing cases were strewed about, and the room exhibited the nakedness and dreariness of a lodging about to be untenanted.

"We are on the wing for Brighton," said he. "We have, you know, Miss Leycester, long been intending to visit the coast, and have at length decided in favour of Brighton, as it possesses some local advantages which may be of use to poor Maria, on whose account we are going."

Mrs. Berkely and her daughters now entered; and Felicia tried to pronounce the name of Evanmore; but the effort was fruitless, and, her cheeks dyed with blushes, she sat down. Mrs. Berkely and her young friends perceived her embarrassment, but were too delicate to notice it even by a smile; and instantly

conjecturing she saw Mr. Evanmore, Mrs. Berkely's easy address to him spared Felicia any further uneasiness.

While Felicia was expressing her joy at the prospect of so soon meeting them again, Mr. Berkely entered into conversation with Evanmore, with whom he soon became much pleased.

"Well, really mother," said he, when they at length took their leave, "I have, as Irishmen expressively say, been agreeably disappointed. I own, from what I had heard of Mr. Evanmore, I did not expect to find him so sensible; and I acknowledge I have often secretly wondered at Miss Leycester's attachment."

"Wondered! why?" inquired Miss Berkely, on whom Evanmore's elegant person and gentlemanly manners had not been thrown away. "Wondered! I scarcely ever saw a more pleasing handsome man!"

"True," said Mrs. Berkely with a smile; "but your brother gave Miss Leycester credit for having a mind above being captivated with mere externals; and he had heard, what he now finds was unjust, that Mr. Evanmore's un-

derstanding was by no means strong, or his education a very liberal one."

Miss Berkely blushed. "Ah, dear mama, I see my error; but you must not expect in me a Miss Leycester."

"I now repeat your question, and ask why? The abilities, and personal attractions of Miss Leycester fall to the lot of few young women; but my Sophia has an understanding that, if properly directed, will never mislead her, and is not, I trust, inferior even to her on any of those essential points which constitute the principal charm of woman."

Miss Berkely fondly took her mother's hand. "I will try to deserve your compliment, Mama; and before I ever again give my confidence, ascertain, like Miss Leycester, that it is well placed."

"It remains to be proved that Miss Leycester's confidence has been well placed;" said Mrs. Berkely. "Conformity of character, it is well known, is by no means essential to attachment; but similarity of pursuits, and congeniality of ideas on all major points, are indispensable to real happiness; and I shall be re-

joiced to find that the son of Mrs. Evanmore equals the expectations of Mrs. Beauclerc's niece."

When Felicia returned to Russell-square, she was astonished and alarmed at finding Jenny drowned in tears, sitting in her apartment.

Jenny's sorrows were not of that retiring kind which it seems indelicate to interrupt with earthly consolation ; and Felicia eagerly pressed to know the origin of her distress. A few words, alas ! explained the cause. She had learnt from Miss Juliana, Rosalind's maid, between whom and herself there had long existed a secret animosity, that she would not be permitted to accompany the family to Brighton.

"Only to think," she continued, when grief and indignation allowed her to articulate, "after all I have done for 'em all—after slaving and fettling* like a neger to make friends with 'em, that it should kum to this ! Oh, it's too bad for aught ! too bad for aught ! But I know all as how and about it. Miss Juliana, rabbit her ! is at the bottom of it. She's set my Lady Wyedale against me, I am aware. Oh, she's an

* Cleaning.

ill an, and no better than she should be, or I am much mista'en. Perhaps it was fear o'my seeing over much she wished hid; or belike I am not grand enough dressed, and they shame o'me."

Injuries are much easier to be borne than insults, or supposed injustice to our personal merit; and as her fancy suggested this last supposition, her affliction increased so much, that Felicia who had herself felt a little hurt at this unexpected arrangement, undertook to intercede with Lady Wyedale in her behalf.

For the first time she solicited a favour of any moment of her aunt, and offered to be at the expense of sending her by the coach; but her Ladyship was invulnerable to Jenny's misery, and Felicia's entreaties; and at length, by way of deciding the argument, quitted the room.

"Use your influence over my aunt, Rosalind," said Felicia, "to persuade her to grant me this petition."

"My influence, my dear! Why, have you not already discovered she is never to be persuaded into any thing? To solicit a thing from her is tantamount to losing your suit. Besides, as

your maid would say, she is now in a most *particklar* bad temper; so that I dare not attempt the thing; and she has been thrown into it by learning from Evanmore that your delectable friends, the Berkelys, are going to Brighton. They were, I know, intending to go to the sea: I half feared it might be there; for your good people have no objection to seeing the pomps and vanities of the world, if they cannot partake of them; but I was aware if she thought they would visit Brighton she would stay away, or march somewhere else, and I had a motive for wishing to be there; so I told her, when she prudently wished to obtain a little information respecting their views before she wrote to engage lodgings, that she might depend upon it Brighton, the seat of the Prince Regent, would never be their selection. I prophesied it would be sadly too gay, and declared that Worthing, Bognor, every other place on the coast, in short, would be more likely; and now that the house is taken, and no getting off but at a tremendous expense and a betrayal of her motives, she feels obliged to go. Oh, no! the thing is hopeless, be assured. Poor Jenny

must not expect to lave her sweet person in Neptune's briny element. Come don't look so disconsolate. I thought you had been too much of a philosopher to lament what is unavoidable. Jenny will have plenty of time to gossip, and see sights in our absence, the two greatest pleasures her mind is capable of enjoying. Besides, as there seems to be an implacable animosity between her and my *maîtresse des robes*, I really think she will be more comfortable to remain where she is; and I must not have you dejected, lest your gloom should throw a shade over my spirits, and I mean to be excessively happy at Brighton. *Apropos*—I suppose you have not forgotten Lord Edgermond is there?"

"I should have done so, had not your anxiety to direct our footsteps there reminded me of it."

"Ah, don't be too confident; nor so affectedly indifferent. To be sure you are engaged—otherwise it would be impossible to see him with perfect *nonchalance*."

"Why impossible?"

"How can you ask such a question? *Imprimis*, has he not a coronet?"

“True; but that does not, in my opinion, contain within its gilded circle all the perfections of man; nor ensure all the happiness he is capable of enjoying. It must, and ought, always to command respect, but it cannot secure esteem, nor control adversity.”

“Well, I know you have odd, obsolete ideas. Then is he not an Adonis—an Apollo Belvedere—in short, is he not beautiful?”

“Beautiful, Rosalind! Pray don’t apply that term to any man—I think the dignity of the lords of the creation absolutely degraded by such an epithet. Besides, I esteem beauty so unnecessary an attribute in them, that its absence or possession is perfectly immaterial. Even in woman it ought never to be too highly estimated; and for the honour of our sex, I really think person with them is little considered when put in competition with the more lasting charms of the mind.”

“I do not wonder that these are your sentiments,” said Rosalind archly, “for it cannot be denied, that Mr. Evanmore is certainly very plain.”

Felicia blushed. “His appearance might at first, I will admit, interest me in his favour;

but I should never have permitted myself to love him with the tenderness I now feel, had not his heart been in unison with his features."

"Oh, as to that, every young lady's lover has much the same sort of heart, be assured; varied by a few lighter or deeper shades of difference. Edgermond, for instance, is perhaps rather more of a *philanderer* than Evanmore, or at least he has the reputation of being *un peu volage* in his attachments to the fair sex; and, I must candidly confess, I have not the least idea that his Lordship has any very strong aspirations after matrimony. But few young men have—and—"

"Then I fervently hope, my dearest, dearest Rosalind, you will discourage all his attentions: treat him for the future with the most distant reserve."

"My dear little sanctimonious prude, how excessively becoming that blush of shame and anger is to you; and your virtuous indignation against *philanderers*, has given an *esprit* to your countenance, that renders you, what you so much despise, a beauty. I wish Evanmore was here! Well, but *passe cela*. Don't you

know the greater the difficulty in bringing the gentleman to bear his chains, the greater the *eclat* to his enslaver? Have you lived in the country all your life, and are not aware, that the fox which has afforded the hardest day's chase, is always the most prized by the sportsman?"

"Oh, Rosalind!" cried Felicia in a tone of bitter disappointment and mortification, as her mind first slowly admitted the idea that her lovely, idolized sister, did not possess those virtuous principles and religious feelings which are the only bulwark of woman, and give the best polish to beauty.

"You are thinking of me, Felicia," said Rosalind, suddenly fixing her dark, laughing eyes on her sister's face, and playfully flinging one lily arm around her neck as Felicia sat pensive and silent at the table; "and your reflections are not of a complimentary nature."

"I was undoubtedly thinking of you," replied Felicia, a little embarrassed at Rosalind's ready developement of her sentiments.

"And, as I guessed, not investing me with the attributes of an angel. Well, I forgive you; but indeed you must acknowledge you are a little of a prude, and look for a degree of per-

fection you will never meet with, even in *le plus amiable des hommes*, Evanmore."

"If by the term *prude*, you mean I possess that delicacy of mind which is the safeguard of modesty, I hope I shall never lose the appellation: and if I meet not with that virtue in Evanmore which all *may* reach if they choose, and all *must* attain, or misery will be their portion; be assured I will never marry him, though our separation should cost me all that renders this world dear to me."

"Bravo! Two good novel-like sentences, garnished with a small tincture of tragedy rant. I believe if I had thought my little harmless remarks would have produced such a *tirade*, I should have spared them. But joking apart, my dear Felicia, in my aunt Beauclerc's time all these things might be obtained in a lover, but now it is a *bêtise* to expect them. I assure you no one thinks of being hard upon a man because he is a little gay, or perhaps keeps a pussy."

Felicia gave an involuntary start—Rosalind answered it with a laugh.

"You, dear primitive Christian, I fear, after all, you will add one more to the eleven thousand

virgins so celebrated in monastic history. Why, so little are such punctilios regarded, Lord Edgermond would not care if all the world knew he had *une chère amie*."

"No! how lost must that man have become to virtue! How depraved his mind, when he ceases even to wish to be thought amiable! Oh, Rosalind, repress, for the sake of your peace and respectability, the dangerous attentions of such a man."

"My dear Felicia, these are the ravings of a novice. Lord Edgermond is handsome, elegant, rich, fashionable, and has a long *et cetera* of other perfections. Do you, therefore, seriously think he would be refused by any woman, however high her rank, merely on the ground of not being a Joseph?"

"I should hope some would; and I trust he will never, never place it in my Rosalind's power, to show that she lightly esteems the want of that principle which alone confers honour or respectability on man."

"Knowing that you do not *mean* to be spiteful, I forgive you dear Philly—"

"And I hope," continued Felicia, earnestly laying her hand on the snowy arm that yet

rested on her neck, "as you are aware of his character, you will not permit your affections to become entangled beyond the power of withdrawing them, should he never solicit their possession. This alone is a subject I have often wished to hint to you; for indeed Rosalind I have long apprehended he felt not that attachment towards you which, unacquainted with his character, I then wished."

"Oh! on that head *consolez-vous*. My heart, *heureusement*, is in no danger. People in this age don't marry from a silly *penchant*, or because they have, as you would term it, *kindred souls*. All that sort of thing is left for the *canaille*, to whom, as it can make no difference whether they live in a hut or a hovel, liking goes a great way. Oh, no! ladies marry to have a house of their own, an establishment, liberty, and all the glorious accompaniments included in the privileges of a matron, from tyrannizing over a husband, down to plaguing his footboy. And men—But what can tempt men to marry, it is impossible to conjecture! for they have all these advantages without the penalty. Well, I believe we must now bring our *tête-à-tête* to a finale. And really what you

have been saying possesses one charm even for me, novelty. These are new doctrines to me. Is it instinct in you, Felicia? Were you really always the same prudent, wise, demure, sententious soul you now are? And the marvel becomes greater by thinking of what you will be. Dear! what a *rara-avis* of a woman must aunt Beauclerc have been, if you are only now, as you sometimes tell me, striving to tread in her steps."

Felicia coloured. Any flippant allusion to her aunt never failed to excite her displeasure, and she was turning away when Rosalind sportively detained her.

"Nay, you shall not leave me in anger. Indeed you must not let that dear, little, meek face know what it is to feel a flush of passion, such as that which sometimes crimsons my wicked visage when Auntie Wyedale is more than commonly annoying. Remember these sort of provocations exercise your favourite virtues, and considering me as an instrument whereby you are to be made yet more of a saint—love me still better—though, I believe, on that principle the personage I have just quoted, namely, Auntie Wyedale, has the most claim to

your regard. Dear! with her talents and inclination, what a much more voluminous essay she could write on the ‘art of ingeniously tormenting,’ than the one which has already given so many useful hints to a good-natured public.”

“Oh, Rosalind!” said Felicia with a sigh, “you have that about you which disarms resentment, however well deserved.”

“Have I indeed?” pressing her snowy fingers on each side of Felicia’s face, “I rejoice to hear it; for thoughtless and unfeeling as I may sometimes appear, I do assure you I love you better than any thing in the *whole* world—aye the whole world, but—myself.”—She imprinted a fond kiss on her sister’s forehead, and then gaily flew out of the room to make some further preparation for the excursion.

It is in the nature of affection to exalt the beloved object, and invest it with ten thousand fancied perfections. Felicia had suddenly made a painful discovery; for in the midst of Rosalind’s apparent levity, she had believed she possessed strong virtuous principles; and still her attachment encircled Rosalind in a splendid

halo, whose brightness dazzled the sober sight of her judgment. Even yet she ascribed to mere *gaieté de cœur* what had escaped her sister's lips, and though lamenting that she was so volatile, and so little under the influence of religious impressions, fondly flattered herself she should be able to effect some alteration in a mind open as the day, and a disposition so naturally inclined to be all that is lovely and amiable. "And even if she were serious," thought Felicia, when she laid her head on her pillow; "ought I not rather to regard her with increased pity? Poor girl! did she not say mine were novel sentiments to her. Oh, may I never forget to be grateful for the superior advantages I have received; or while I am thus sensible of her faults, omit to remember that, such as she is, I should have been, had not a merciful Providence ordained, that my infant steps should be guided by the hand of one of his chosen people!"

CHAPTER X.

Ah!—World unknown! how charming is thy view,
Thy pleasures many, and each pleasure new;
Ah!—World experienc'd! what of thee is told?
How few thy pleasures, and those few how old.

Crabbe.

TIME always mitigates, if it does not wholly efface, those mortifications which are inflicted upon us by caprice or unkindness; though if its power were estimated by the acuteness of our feelings under their first impression, we should say, their remembrance would live for ever. Happily also every mind has been gifted with its own peculiar antidote to sorrow. The quick and irritable soon exhaust their sufferings in violence, while the patient lose its bitterness in fortitude and resignation. As the “flood of grief decreaseth when it can swell no higher,” so poor Jenny’s lamentations gradually began to subside; and Felicia had the

satisfaction of seeing her in a comparative state of tranquillity before she quitted her.

Though several years older than herself, knowing her situation as Jenny's mistress rendered her in some degree answerable for her conduct, Felicia gave her, previous to her departure, as much work to execute as would, she thought, leave her unexposed to the temptations and dangers of utter idleness; selected several books suited to her capacity and views, from her own library, for her perusal; and, sensible that her rank gave her a consequence in Jenny's eyes, independant of their connection with each other, intreated her not to suffer the pernicious example, or evil entreaties of others, ever to influence her to forget those precepts, which had been so carefully instilled into her mind by one who was now the inhabitant of a brighter sphere; and whose spirit, perhaps, might be permitted to watch over those whom she had, while living, so anxiously endeavoured to train to that happiness she was now enjoying.

Jenny wept, and promised obedience. Like her young mistress, she had anticipated her visit to London, with almost unmingled sensations

of delight, and, like her, had experienced how different, alas! are pleasures in prospective and pleasures in possession. She thought when an inhabitant of the metropolis, and living in the splendid establishment of the rich Lady Wyedale, the day would only be too short for its enjoyments. She had now passed nearly four months in that scene, which at a distance appeared so alluring, and began to look back with something like regret on the quiet amusements, the placid happiness of the little sunny cottage at Leominster. There she had been esteemed for those qualities which here were either wholly overlooked or despised. Her skill in making ointments, broths, and compounding simple medicines under the direction of her mistress for the poor of the village, the neatness with which she executed her share of the clothes and baby-linen that Mrs. Beauclerc often gave away among her humble neighbours, her cheerful piety, and industrious habits, which there had obtained her the warmest commendations, were here totally disregarded. Nobody in Russel-square was unfashionable enough to care what became of the sores or sufferings of the *canaille*. Her desire to go to

church had subjected her to many a laugh in the servants'-hall, and many a reprimand in the housekeeper's-room; while her exertions, as a sort of jack of all trades, lady's maid to the two other lady's maids, assistant to the housekeeper, and partner with the housemaid, had secured her neither regard nor respect. Nothing is so contagious as contempt, or so disagreeable to the unprincipled, as principle. Her young mistress, it was evident, had no interest with their lady—was going to marry a man of small fortune, and, along with her maid, possessed notions and habits which rendered both very unpleasant and dangerous guests. Jenny, therefore, gradually found herself a personage of no importance, and at length displeased at the injustice and unkindness with which she was treated, began to discontinue those attentions which had alone procured her any show of civility. Her conduct had been especially resented by Miss Juliana Lyssons, Rosalind's maid, and after some trifling *fracas* the gauntlet was fairly thrown down between them, and they were only waiting for an opportunity of fighting it out. As Jenny rightly conjectured, she owed this heavy disappointment to the malevolence and machinations of

her adversary, Miss Juliana, who had many reasons for not wishing to have her as a companion ; and she never ceased her importunities to Lady Wyedale's maid, to second her suit with her Ladyship, till she had succeeded in achieving the point. To atone, however, for all these storms and disappointments, Jenny had a harbour of rest in prospective, in which she had anchored with a certainty of happiness. Felicia's marriage would, she felt persuaded, restore her to all her former consequence ; nay environ her with additional glory. She was promised the situation of housekeeper by Evanmore himself, and from the kindness and attachment of Felicia she knew she had every thing to expect. It was, therefore, with a degree of pleasure that almost repaid her past mortification, she received the linen which Felicia, with a modest blush, put into her hand, assured from her silence and confusion, she might consider it the first step towards their mutual happiness. And her heart cheered from its late gloom by this simple circumstance, she saw her young mistress drive from the door without a tear of regret.

Summer was fled, but the mild graces of

Autumn remained to deck the lovely face of nature, and Felicia, who travelled in Evanmore's Phaeton, saw the beauties of the surrounding landscape with the enlightened eye of taste and piety. The villagers were busy with the harvest; and the deep golden colour of the waving corn-fields, seen through the leafy branches of the trees, or obtained where a gate or stile broke the uniformity of the flower-covered hedges, on either side of the road, beautifully contrasted with the clear serene azure of the sky, whose lovely vault was dappled by a few fleecy clouds of transparent lustre.

Mrs. Beauclerc resided some miles from the coast, as her complaints were of a nature that rendered its breezes rather prejudicial than otherwise. Felicia had never yet seen the sea, and Evanmore anticipated much pleasure from her surprise on viewing the gay groupes scattered on the Steyne—Felicia herself, from contemplating the grandeur of the majestic ocean.

It was late in the afternoon when Lady Wyedale, who travelled with her own horses, and chose to dine on the road, was in readiness to commence her journey.

The day had become suddenly overcast, and

Evanmore, fearful of rain, urged Felicia to avail herself of Lady Wyedale's offer of a seat in her barouche; but Felicia, too impatient to view the sea, and unapprehensive of the threatening storm, declined the invitation. For many miles the sky was shrouded in heavy clouds, and a cold piercing wind blew so keenly in the faces of the travellers, they had no spirits to enter into any conversation: the road too was dreary and barren; and as she wrapped her pelisse around her, Felicia almost felt an uneasy *presentiment* of some impending disappointment. The evening closed rapidly in, and they were almost enveloped in darkness, when the wind arose, and the moon, after long struggling to acquire her dominion, suddenly emerged from behind a dark cloud, and shone forth in spotless glory. The night was chill, but not undelightful; and the soft light of the stars gleamed bright in the clear canopy of Heaven.

"See, Felicia!" said Evanmore; she looked eagerly forward, and in a moment the dark blue sea, its transparent waves, heaving and sparkling under the glittering radiance of the moon met her eyes. It looked a flood of liquid light, and each wave was as a wave of silver. The

lovely planet of evening shone brilliantly on the deep cerulean of the cloudless sky, and blended its fairy beams with the long stream of refulgence that irradiated the broad expanse of the illumined ocean. All was solemn stillness—the calm repose of nature; not a sound was heard but the ripple of the waves as they murmured over the sands, or dashed with impetuosity against the pier. A few rays of the moon whitened the picturesque walls of the church, and several lights glanced cheerfully from the windows of the now silent inhabitants.

“Oh, what a scene!” whispered Felicia, pressing Evanmore’s arm. How the soul expands to its Maker, when the glories of that world He has called out of darkness and chaos thus meet the gaze of his creatures!”

“You are a little of an enthusiast, Felicia,” said he, smiling. “What would Rosalind say if she heard you?”

“Am I an enthusiast, because I see with admiration and gratitude the works of the Almighty?” said she, in a tone of mingled surprise, and tender reproach.

“Undoubtedly not. I was merely thinking Rosalind would have quizzed you, my love.”

“ Probably she might ; but Rosalind ”—she paused—Rosalind was so dear to her, she revolted from avowing, even to Evanmore, the least hint to her disadvantage ; and fearful her broken sentence might have conveyed some suspicion of the truth, she hastily turned the conversation.

There are moments when the soul, wrought up to a degree of almost enthusiasm, is peculiarly liable to the impressions of pain or pleasure—when susceptible of the purest, tenderest, sentiments of our nature, the heart shrinks with unwonted irritability from any thing that seems to jar the chord of refined feeling. Felicia’s spirits received a sudden chill, from which she vainly strove to recover them, and she entered the scene of so much expected happiness dejected, she scarcely knew why.

The last three months of Rosalind’s existence had been spent in something like obscurity ; for decency required, that she should not partake of any public amusements until a few weeks after Mrs. Beauclerc’s death ; and after that period the summer was so far advanced, that London boasted of few attractions for her. The pleasures therefore she intended to partake of in

Brighton, possessed a certain degree of novelty in her eyes that greatly enhanced their value ; and she prepared for their enjoyment with all the ardour of a youthful imagination, and unbounded hilarity of spirits. It was high season ; and Brighton, honoured by the presence of its tutelar divinity, never possessed more attractions. Rosalind instantly launched into all its gaieties, and tried to persuade herself she had never felt happier. A certain indescribable sensation, however, every now and then stole over her heart, which, like a thick cloud passing over the sun, darkens for a moment its mid-day radiance. She had seen Lord Edgermond several times on the sands, and met him repeatedly at the theatre. He had likewise called twice upon Lady Wyedale ; but he preserved towards her a distance which was as strange as it was disagreeable. Rosalind vainly endeavoured to thaw the icy chains in which he seemed bound ; and, mistress of all the varied arts of a finished coquette, tried each in its turn without success. His Lordship's bow when they met on the sands was graceful as ever—his smile, as he sometimes nodded while he rode past the carriage, or carelessly moved to her from an

opposite box at the theatre, was always sweet and condescending—but cold.

The love of admiration was, with Rosalind, paramount over every other feeling ; universal conquest, in her opinion, the palladium of happiness ; and while clouds of mortified vanity darkened her beautiful brow, she half-reluctantly admitted the idea, that she had indeed failed to inspire his Lordship with sufficient affection to make her an offer of his hand, and, what she prized more, his title. Still, when her glass reflected to her view her matchless figure, and the beauty of her lovely features, she could not believe his conquest entirely hopeless ; and every day beheld her more attractive than the last.

Felicia, in the mean time, renewed her friendship with the Berkelys, and while Rosalind was gaily fluttering from one scene of amusement to another, divided her time between her affectionate attendance on her aunt, whose increased indisposition really demanded such attention, and the Berkelys, with whom she commonly walked every day. Evanmore sometimes drove her in his phaeton ; and devoted to her all the leisure which Rosalind left on his hands ; but

he was too convenient and agreeable a companion to be much spared at such a time. Rosalind had no objection to be seen with a handsome, elegant man, continually in her train, and one whose engagement to her sister precluded the possibility of his being any impediment to her views. Then he danced inimitably, and always remained disengaged, that, if any disagreeable partner presented himself, she might plead his prior right to her hand. Under these circumstances Felicia willingly waved many of those little attentions, and that exclusive devotion she had a right to expect from her lover, without a sentiment of regret.

“There,” cried Rosalind, one morning, gaily flinging down a card, “is a ticket for the concert to-night; and you positively shall accept it. Nay, don’t start, and look so dubious. A concert would not sully the purity of an angel; and as a proof of its innocence, the Berkelys whom you make your prototype, will be sure to be there. Even the old lady has no objection to giving her ears a treat at a concert, though she would die rather than indulge her eyes with the sight of a play.”

“Surely, Felicia,” in a tone half-serious, half-

playful, "you do not endeavour to be the servile copyist of the Berkelys?" said Evanmore, on whose mind the sneers and ridicule levelled at them by Lady Wyedale and Rosalind had not fallen harmless, "I hope you will go whether they do or not."

"I had no intention of declining to accompany you," said Felicia; "I merely looked uncertain, because I feared my aunt might not be able to spare me."

Lady Wyedale had little of what is called the milk of human kindness in her composition; but Felicia's unceasing assiduities, and unwearied endurance of her humours, had gained a little upon her former dislike; and she instantly gave her permission to avail herself of Rosalind's present.

CHAPTER XI.

So bright the tear in Beauty's eye
Love half regrets to kiss it dry—
So sweet the blush of bashfulness,
Even Pity scarce can wish it less.—

Lord Byron.

OF music, as a science and amusement, Felicia was passionately fond. She had a fine ear, and though by no means so great a proficient as Rosalind, who had studied for *effect*, she had both knowledge and taste enough to render a concert an entertainment of all others enchanting to her. She was putting the last finish to her dress when Rosalind, whose every step was a bound, and every motion had the agile lightness of a sylph, gracefully glided into her room.

“ Ah! dressed already! I am come to give you my assistance, but I see you scarcely require it. And, yet if it would not be treason, I could point out a little improvement.”

“*Commencez*, then,” said Felicia gaily.

“Why, I should like to see a little more of you—*comprenez-vous*?”

“No,” said Felicia, with the utmost simplicity.

“Why, I should like to see more of my Philly’s lily-white skin, and less of her crape tucker. Ah! I find I am treading on forbidden ground; I see I must be contented. You seem quite frightened at the bare suggestion; and after all, you look very pretty as you are. Don’t be alarmed, I won’t lay violent hands either on you, or your dearly-beloved tucker,” she continued, approaching her; “I only wish to give your glossy tresses a rather better air. Really, Philly, a little more *usage du monde*, and a little less *mauvaise honte*, would make you quite the rage; and, instead of being contented with a man of fifteen hundred a-year, you might without vanity aspire to one of fifteen thousand.”

Felicia smiled, and shook her head, and arm in arm they went into the drawing-room.

“Does she not look pretty?” she cried, throwing open the door, and leading in Felicia as she spoke; “does she not look pretty, Evan-

more—now I have made her more like other people?”

Evanmore readily assented ; but he was more struck by the remark, that she looked, for the first time, *like other people*, than charmed by her appearance. The excessive admiration which he had seen bestowed on Rosalind, had excited a wish in his bosom, that his own Felicia might be thought equally attractive ; and as they were descending the stairs to enter the carriage, he whispered her, that he wished she would always dress like Rosalind.

“ If I did,” said she, with a sweet smile, “ I should not resemble her. You know, my dearest Evanmore, she is a finished beauty.”

Evanmore felt something like mortification on receiving this intelligence ; but they had now reached the carriage : Rosalind was already seated : they drove off ; and with a fluttering heart, and spirits wound up by youthful expectation, Felicia made her first *début* in the concert room at Brighton.

Rosalind was an excellent *cicerone* ; and after having secured seats, which permitted them to see every object to the greatest advantage, she

began to give her wondering sister some account of the principal *dramatis personæ*.

“Don’t glue your eyes to the orchestra and chandeliers,” said she in a whisper, “but keep them on the door ; and when you see any object that strikes your attention, give me a gentle push, and I will leave off flirting with your elect, to give you all the information in my power. Do not, however, for mercy’s sake, ask any questions, because when we are surrounded by neighbours, if they caught them, they would set you down for a mere country cousin.”

Evanmore almost shuddered as the words “mere country cousin” met his ears, and half-apprehensively he fixed his eyes on the object of suspicion ; but all his fears died away as he caught her’s beaming on him with mingled tenderness and delight.

It was very early ; for Rosalind, though she liked to go late to every other amusement, had no desire to be lost in the croud of a concert-room ; and she was gaily chatting away with Evanmore, when the prescribed signal between Felicia and herself diverted her attention to the door.

“Oh, Evanmore! fly directly, and bring her to us—you see she does not know where to go,” she cried, bowing most graciously as she spoke to a young lady of singular appearance, who was standing close to the door, and with an opera-glass held to her eye, reconnoitering the assembled groupe with all the cool composure of a general at the head of his troops. “Yet stay, let me give Felicia some hint of the Lady’s character, that she may enjoy the treat more. The object of your well-founded amazement is, that most unique animal of the biped species, a philosopher in petticoats. That is, a sort of incongruous, heterogeneous mass of learning, ignorance, and folly; either laughable from its absurdity, or disgusting from its pedantry. She reads her Bible in Hebrew, her Testament in Greek, her Prayer-book in French, and her novels in German—so at least her grandmama says. Then, as she is always laudably engaged in the pursuit of learning, whenever you meet her you are favoured, in addition to these standing dishes, with a taste of what she is then hashing up for the public, which is generally decided by the fashion of the day, or the situation in which she happens to be placed.

Thus, about four years ago, when it first became the rage to crowd every room in your house with flowers and exotics, she was a botanist; quoted whole pages out of Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, and stunned your ears with *Monandria*, *Diandria*, *Monadelphia*, *Polyadelphia*, *Fulcra*, *Folia*, *Fructus*, &c. &c. And really, while this was her hobby, her rides were as amusing to her friends as herself; but unfortunately happening one evening to describe, rather too minutely, the marriage of a white rose-tree with a black currant bush, from which strange union she expected a sort of magpie-coloured, mule bud, Lord Edgermond laughed so heartily, and teased her with so many questions, her modesty took the alarm; or rather, perceiving that she could no longer show her knowledge without exciting ridicule, she relinquished the study altogether (for display is her object), and took to one where she might canter her favourite Pegasus without apprehension or control. At one time she affected to be a mineralogist and lapidary, and then, like the good girl in the fairy-tale, she never opened her mouth but some precious stone fell out of it, from the diamond of Golconda to the pebble

of Scotia. She bored you with accounts of spars, crystallizations, stalactites, petrifications, fossils, bitumens, metals perfect and imperfect, and without mercy, or any compunctious visitings of conscience, tore up the inside of poor old mother earth to supply her with topics of conversation. She has, in short, a little knowledge of every thing; a little of languages, a little of botany, a little of mineralogy, a little of conchology, a little of chemistry, a little of ornithology, a little of meteorology, &c. &c. and precious little it is. If a philosopher could look into her head, like the lover in the *Spectator*, who had the privilege of viewing his mistress's brains, I verily believe he would see much the same as he did, with the addition of some crabbed words, and heads and tails of the sciences. She appears, however, wonderfully wise when you are first acquainted with her; and I have seen as much consternation exhibited in a party where she has, after having been long studying how to display herself to the greatest advantage, pounced upon a poor female acquaintance, as when a hawk or a kite, after hovering some seconds in the air, stoops on a defenceless chick, to the terror of the farm-yard.

But these literary alarms soon wear off on acquaintance, for she is all *écorce*, a mere outside shell of learning, no nut to satisfy the palate after the eye has been sufficiently gratified. Indeed she always reminds me, when she is preparing to strike her auditors dumb with the profundity of her wisdom, of the Turkish cry, "In the name of the Prophet—*figs*."—As she is now the inhabitant of a seaport, conchology will be the order of the day: you are a stranger, and, mark me, she will burst upon you like the rushing of a cataract, in her literary character: therefore be prepared, and don't feed her egregious vanity by seeming alarmed; for she is never more delighted than when, by some of her enigmas, she sees she has completely puzzled her audience. Meet her with her own weapons. When she cries univalve—do you say bivalve. When she talks of corallines—do you speak of zoophites; and if you find yourself in a dilemma, or as your dear Jenny would say *quandary*, do as I have often before done, intrench yourself in some high-sounding words and unintelligible phrases, and get handsomely out of the scrape."

Felicia involuntarily smiled as Rosalind

finished this sketch of her young acquaintance; but she had no inclination to prolong the topic by a reply; for at that moment she saw Mr. Berkely, his mother, and eldest sister enter the room. It was now nearly full, and they appeared to have some difficulty in obtaining places.

“Oh! do offer them our seats,” said she eagerly to Evanmore.

“Stir at your peril, man!” said Rosalind, laying hold on his arm, “I have been rejoicing at our distance.”

Charmed by the magic of her eye and voice, Evanmore instantly resumed the seat from which he had half-risen, and Felicia felt momentarily hurt. She had never before met the Berkelys in company; and the mild dignity of Mrs. Berkely, the tempered sprightliness of her daughter, as she appeared expressing her delight at the splendor of the scene, and the cheerful intelligence portrayed in Mr. Berkely's features, as he directed his attention from her to his mother, never struck her more pleasingly. The concert soon, however, commenced, and in the exquisite melody of some of the first performers of the age, she forgot her temporary un-

easiness. Her enjoyment was not, however, without alloy. Rosalind came for any other purpose than that of listening, and though she had a delighted hearer in Evanmore, she insisted upon Felicia's also attending to her observations.

“ Do you see that young man with red hair and white eyes, ‘in a fine phrenzy rolling,’ close by the *foolosopher* I have already introduced to your notice? Report says, he has been taken captive by her attractions, personal and mental, and intends to woo the nine sisters to his abode, in the person of Miss Lucretia Beaumont. I am, however, sceptical as to the fact, for he is a rare specimen of absurdity himself; and there is an old vulgar proverb, that two persons of the same profession never agree. Besides, she has not many golden charms to atone for her deficiency of beauty; and unless fame has sounded her brazen trumpet falsely, his fortune has sustained *un peu deperissement*, in his endeavours to improve it, as speculator in every sort of commodity, but common sense. He was born with a good estate, but unluckily with it, a restless, enterprising spirit, that would never let him be satisfied with the productions

and operations of nature. At one time he proposed to acquire the riches of Cræsus by extracting oil from sunflowers—at another by converting thistle-down into something, which was to usurp the long established dominion of feathers and horse-hair. This last conundrum cost him a suit at law; for his neighbours indicted forty or fifty acres of thistle plants as a nuisance; and by the time he was cast, some other vision occupying that poor wisp of contradictions his brain, the thistle-down was suffered to fly where it listed.”

The first part of the concert was now over; and Evanmore taking an arm of each, strolled up and down the room. Felicia longed to draw nearer to the Berkelys, but in vain. Once they were almost close, and she thought they must meet; but Rosalind, aware of their vicinity, hastily retrograded, and the opportunity never again presented itself.

“I always feel like a bird released from a net, when I get clear from the humdrums,” said she, as the Berkelys vanished from her view. “Evanmore, go and try to bring us a little refreshment here. I will take care of your little frightened hare in your absence:

the poor thing wants somebody to protect her."

Evanmore laughed, and gaily flew to procure some lemonade.

Scarcely was he gone, when an involuntary start from Rosalind, diverted Felicia's attention from the passing crowd, and she saw Lord Edgermond and two ladies standing almost exactly opposite to them. His Lordship's eye glanced over them, but no sign of recognition followed his gaze. He appeared in brilliant spirits, and after chatting some minutes with his fair associates, coolly turned away without bestowing on the blushing mortified Rosalind even one of those distant nods which had hitherto kept alive some indistinct hopes of future conquest.

"And here is the *finale* of *la belle amitié* between you and his Lordship, I hope, my dear Rosalind," said Felicia.

But Rosalind, though indignant, with a truly feminine admiration of variety, thought he had never appeared half so fascinating or delightful before; and, estimating her own perfections little less highly than his, resolved not, as yet at least, to abandon the chase in despair.

While meditating future stratagems to accomplish this grand capture, her ear was suddenly arrested by the well-known tones of Mrs. Hustleton's voice, as she forced her way through a group of young men to join them. Her first impulse was, to fly the society of this most disagreeable acquaintance, and she was rising from her seat when the words, "Well, Frank, I shall now at least be able to introduce you to the beautiful Miss Rosalind, and the lovely Miss Leycester!" uttered in a half-whisper, were too agreeable to the feelings of a disappointed coquette to be wholly disregarded. She turned her head, and Mrs. Hustleton immediately presented a handsome young man as her relation.

"Ah! this is so fortunate! we have only been in Brighton a few hours, or I should have done myself the pleasure of calling on dear Lady Wyedale; particularly as Mr. Osborne has been extremely desirous of being acquainted with my two charming young friends."

At any other time Rosalind would have treated this servile flattery with little less than open derision, or silent contempt; but irritated

at Lord Edgermond's insolence, piqued at his indifference, and anxious to awaken his jealousy, she rewarded its author by the first really gracious smile she had ever received. To awaken feelings of admiration was no difficult task to Rosalind Leycester, and a few arch smiles, a few *piquante* observations, and a few fascinating yet delicate attentions fixed Mr. Osborne near her for the night.

Mrs. Hustleton was much pleased at this unlooked-for reception. In defiance of feelings bordering on instinctive antipathy to Rosalind, she had many reasons, in addition to the one which principally weighed in the scale, for wishing to keep on civil terms with her; for she was the reputed heiress of Lady Wyedale, fashionable, admired and of high family connections. Full of spirits, she was in the midst of a long exordium to a still longer anecdote, when Evanmore returned. Rosalind took the refreshments he extended to her, without favouring him with a glance, but Felicia's more attentive eye perceived he looked suddenly out of spirits.

"Are you ill?" she fondly whispered.

"No," he replied carelessly, and turning the

conversation, he tried to resume his former gaiety. But Felicia, too much attached not to be quick-sighted, saw his spirits had received a sudden check ; and half fearful he might be indisposed, half apprehensive of she knew not what, the residue of the evening passed heavily.

Evanmore, in the mean time, fruitlessly exerted himself to shake off the depression, and ill humour into which he had been thrown, by overhearing a dialogue between two gentlemen relative to his bride elect, and her captivating sister. He was returning with his lemonade, when, as he approached the place where they sat, he was obliged to stop a few instants owing to the pressure of the crowd, and while waiting somewhat impatiently before he could proceed, he heard a gentleman inquire the name of Rosalind Leycester's companion.

" I don't know," replied his friend, " somebody I suppose whom the fair Rosalind has charitably escorted as a foil to set off her own charms."

Evanmore's blood rushed into his cheeks, and the desire of listening became so uncon-

trollable, he shrunk behind them, that no part of the dialogue might escape him.

“No, no,” cried the first speaker, “there is not so great a difference as all that between them. Though, of course, much inferior to Miss Leycester, she is still, I think, a lovely young woman.”

“Lovely! Oh, no! *Jolie—très jolie*—perhaps—nothing more. Then she wants the assured air of a person accustomed to genteel society; and has not beauty enough to be a *belle*, nor animation enough to constitute her a *bel esprit*.”

Evanmore could scarcely refrain from expressing his resentment at this criticism; but before he could determine what to do, they walked to another part of the room. Rosalind and Felicia were exactly opposite to him, and he anxiously endeavoured to convince himself that Felicia had been unjustly treated.

But Felicia's was not a style of beauty to be seen to advantage in a public room. A complexion constitutionally pale, was robbed by the glare of light of those little delicate flushes, which often enlivened it: and her clear hazle

eye was not dark enough to form a sufficient contrast to her unadorned hair ; while the deep mourning, in which she was still arrayed, tended still further to detract from her personal claims to admiration. Rosalind, on the contrary, never looked more strikingly lovely. She was glorying in the bloom of beauty, and her dress was adjusted by the fascinating hand of taste and fashion. The waving curls of her light brown hair, hung over the glossy bands that braided her arching brows ; the inimitable transparency of her radiant complexion was admirably set off by the dark brilliancy of her dazzling eyes, and the slight French grey robe richly trimmed with sparkling jet, which decorated her graceful form. The hope of having gained another conquest, added tenfold animation to her sportive features ; and, for the first time, Evanmore saw the Felicia Leycester he had so long loved, *without pleasure*. Yet as this conviction flashed upon his mind, he blushed with shame, and felt himself a traitor to love. Still he vainly tried to efface the displeasing impression made on his feelings. The words, “neither beauty enough to be a

belle, nor animation sufficient to constitute her a *bel esprit*," rung unpleasantly in his ears ; and, with a half sigh, he at length admitted the mortifying truth, that Felicia, though a most amiable, interesting girl, had no pretension to vie with her sister, and, like her, would never be an object of general admiration. He felt displeased with himself for being hurt at this discovery, and, dissatisfied with all around him, saw the conclusion of the evening's amusement with unwonted pleasure.

Mr. Osborne took his leave of Rosalind with a look that showed they had not parted for ever ; and Rosalind, in high spirits, quitted the room with Evanmore and her sister. They were standing at the entrance, waiting the approach of Lady Wyedale's carriage, when Mr. Berkely carefully supporting his mother, passed them : he slightly inclined his head, and then stepped forwards to his carriage. Rosalind could not endure to be slighted, even by "hum-drums;" and whatever might have been Mr. Berkely's sentiments respecting her, his making no exertion to speak to her during the evening, together with his present distance,

convinced her she had no longer any influence over him. She was of opinion that,

“ In love, indifference is, sure,
The only sign of perfect cure.”

and, piqued at Mr. Berkely's evident emancipation from her chains, she said, “ Look, Evanmore, at Berkely ! Really, I think it less ridiculous to see a man tied to his wife's apron-string than to his mother's.”

Evanmore laughed.

“ Is there any thing ridiculous in a man's being attentive to his mother ?” said Felicia gravely.

“ Evanmore ! I declare your spouse elect is afraid what I have said will make you less dutiful to your own mama.”

“ No,” said Felicia, tenderly pressing Evanmore's hand as it rested in hers, “ I know him too well to fear he is in any danger of changing his principles, or being laughed out of what he knows is right, by even Rosalind Leycester.”

There is no sensation to an ingenuous mind, more painful or degrading than undeserved applause—than an unbounded confidence of which it seems scarcely deserving. Evanmore felt an indescribable sensation on hearing this

compliment, which he had neither the wish nor the power to analyze. A something, however, like a sense of unworthiness fluttered round his heart ; and at their parting, as Felicia timidly presented her blushing cheek, he almost drew back, from a remote apprehension that her confidence and attachment were hardly merited.

CHAPTER XII.

Alas ! the ills of life
Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared,
Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife ;
Its guide experience, and truth its guard.

Beattie.

THE happiness of domestic life flows not from the beauty that enchants the eye, or the graces that captivate in a ball-room ; and it is a truism which cannot be too often repeated, that those who succeed best in amusing strangers, are not always found to be the most enlivening members of the circle assembled round the fire-side of home.

Evanmore viewed the events of the evening with increased self-displeasure, as these reflections arose to his memory ; and he early sought the residence of his Felicia to atone by increased affection for his late mental alienation. He found the party at breakfast. Lady

Wyedale disposed to be irritable, and more than usually complaining;—her nieces each listening to her ill-humour with faces in exact conformity to their feelings. In Felicia's he saw patience mingled with pity; and in Rosalind's displeasure mixed up with ridicule. It seemed indeed somewhat difficult to account for her Ladyship's ill-humour, or make out from her half-uttered reproaches and invectives, more than that, though she had given them leave to attend the concert without her, she was indignant at their having gone; and felt equally angry with Rosalind because she had enjoyed the evening's amusement, as displeased with Felicia for avowing she had not received from it all the pleasure she had anticipated. Her Ladyship, indeed, could scarcely have assigned any better motives for her dissatisfaction. She was, in truth, for the first time, labouring under real indisposition, and made sensible, by suffering, that the time was arriving when she must resign the gilded splendours of the gay world, the pleasures of youth, and the enjoyments of health, for the faded flowers which thinly strew the path of declining age. She had hitherto known no misfortunes—her's

had been a life of unsullied prosperity—unclouded enjoyment. Her hopes of happiness had never pointed to any other state of existence, and she recoiled with terror from the idea which, in defiance of her efforts to banish it, stole occasionally over her mind, that all these glories and delights must be exchanged for the cold dark confines of the grave.

Rosalind was in brilliant spirits. She had, or fancied she had, added one more to the list of her humble adorers; and, as dressed for securing her conquest, she sat near her aunt, Evanmore could not help contrasting her speaking features, laughing eye, and glowing charms, with the peevish inanity expressed in Lady Wyedale's face and manner; or avoid deploring that age should despoil the loveliness of youth of every attraction.

Time is, indeed, a bitter enemy to the graces of youth; and did we not become gradually familiarized to the change which each day produces in our appearance, we should contemplate almost with disgust at sixty, those features which at sixteen had never been seen without secret admiration and delight. But time was not the foe who had entirely robbed

Lady Wyedale of those personal beauties which, thirty years before, had placed her in a sphere to which she was not born. Pride, envy, discontent, idleness, and natural irascibility of temper, had contributed their aid to complete the ruin Evanmore regretted. Evanmore was not, however, in the habit of searching very deeply into causes, when effects were obvious without the least mental trouble; with them he was usually satisfied; and, persuaded that the fascinating Rosalind must, in process of years, become as ugly as her aunt, he tried to regard Felicia's want of beauty with more indifference.

As Rosalind anticipated, Mr. Osborne accompanied his cousin in her promised visit to Lady Wyedale; and in his renewed attentions she found some consolation under Lord Edgermond's estrangement. Her new admirer was young, handsome; had a considerable fortune, and the reputation of being the favourite relative of her old adversary, Mrs. Hustleton, on whose twelve or fourteen thousand pounds she began instinctively to look with more complacency. Not that she had the smallest intention of accepting Mr. Osborne, should he solicit her

hand; but in defiance of the unbounded adulation she was in the habit of receiving, Rosalind had never yet been fairly requested to enter the pale of matrimony; and, she was not unwilling to have it said, that such a man had fallen a victim to her charms. The expensive elegance of Rosalind's dress, her extreme beauty, and uncertainty of fortune, had been reasons sufficient why her prudent lovers had hitherto declined to go beyond the limits of a modern flirtation; and the evident pleasure with which she received Lord Edgermond's attentions, still further contributed to rob her of the inestimable privilege of rejection. She had *tact* enough to perceive a something beyond mere admiration in young Osborne's face, and in addition to the *eclat* arising from his capture, she was not without hopes it might impel Lord Edgermond to believe she was not quite so easy of attainment as he seemed to imagine.

Vanity to Rosalind was a hydra with so many heads, that its extinction was impossible. She could not bear to suppose Lord Edgermond insensible to her many charms, and at length succeeded in persuading herself that his Lordship's indifference was affected for the

purpose of trying her attachment, or arose from an insolent belief, that she was perfectly attainable whenever he might choose to come forwards ; and to arouse his security and fears was now her settled purpose.

After a lengthened visit of nearly an hour, Mr. Osborne and his cousin left Lady Wyedale's ; and Evanmore, at Rosalind's request, prepared to drive her on the sands in his phaeton. There she expected to meet both her embryo lover and recreant knight, and hoped to have the opportunity of playing off one against the other.

Lady Wyedale announced her intention of calling upon an acquaintance, newly arrived on the Steyne, and as she did not invite Felicia to accompany her, she determined to seize the opportunity, afforded by her absence, of visiting the Berkelys. She had almost reached Mrs. Berkely's door, when she met Maria Berkely in her bath chair, escorted by her brother. She thought Mr. Berkely's manner was reserved, and when she was ushered into Mrs. Berkely's presence felt assured she had not been mistaken. She looked unusually grave, and Miss Berkely continued her needle-work after the compli-

ments of the morning had passed without speaking.

“ I wished to express my regret at not having had it in my power to join you last night,” said Felicia, half afraid Mrs. Berkely might esteem her behaviour rude.

“ You were near us several times,” said Mrs. Berkely.

“ But I had no opportunity of doing so, though I much wished it,” said Felicia.

Mrs. Berkely looked steadfastly at her. Felicia’s was a face that might easily be read, and Mrs. Berkely felt all her former confidence revive.

“ I do not doubt you, my dear young friend,” said she. “ When we are in company we cannot always do as we would wish. I own, I felt a little hurt at your seeming neglect, and I fear you perceived it ; but that gravity you have observed, arises principally from the information I have this morning unexpectedly received, that my poor Maria is in more immediate danger than I had apprehended.” Her voice faltered, and Miss Berkely wept aloud. “ Sophia,” said she, in a gentle tone, “ go to your sister, and prevail

upon her to accompany you in a walk. The air will be of service to you both, and I wish for some conversation with Miss Leycester." Miss Berkely immediately left the room, and Mrs. Berkely, taking Felicia's hand, said, "I believe our stay here will be short. I am, therefore, happy to have the opportunity of telling you, that those favourable sentiments with which I was inclined to view the adopted child of my lamented friend, have been confirmed by intimacy. Under these circumstances, I particularly lament that, in all human probability, we shall never more meet in this world; at least, for any length of time. As a married woman you will have little leisure to perform distant journeys, or pay long visits; and I am so far advanced in the vale of life, that I ought to consider every day I pass on earth an especial gift of Heaven. Still, I am unwilling to think that all intercourse must cease between us, and have long been desirous of expressing my wish to see you at Elm-grove previous to your union. The indisposition of my Maria will, I am aware, throw a gloom over your visit, but it may be one which will tend to increase your present desire after virtue, and still further

prepare you for that trial Maria is now undergoing."

It had been Mrs. Beauclerc's anxious desire, while nurturing every feminine feeling, strengthening all those tender sympathies of which Felicia's mind was unusually susceptible, to repress every thing that bordered on sickly sentiment, or encourage a proneness to that sensibility which is more often the occasion of pain to its possessor than an advantage to mankind; and though Felicia spoke through starting tears, she endeavoured to suppress her own emotions, that she might not increase the anguish which she saw struggling at the heart of Mrs. Berkely. She expressed her happiness at the idea of spending some little time at Elmgrove; and, anxious to administer consolation to a mother under such a calamity, ventured to hint her hopes, that Miss Maria Berkely's complaints were not of so serious a nature as she apprehended.

Mrs. Berkely shook her head. "It is in vain to hope against certainty, my dear Miss Leycester—my Maria must leave us; but she will not leave us without that consolation, which assuages the anguish of such partings.

She is a Christian ! I shall watch that lovely form I have for years seen, with perhaps too much pride—droop—languish—and die. But,

“ To man, in this, his trial state,
The privilege is given,
When tost by tides of human fate,
To anchor fast on Heaven.”

My Maria has availed herself of this privilege ; and, though I shall see her earthly part committed to the tomb ; I know her spirit will instantly ascend to its kindred skies. Oh, Miss Leycester !” she continued, the tears she had been so long trying to suppress streaming over her pale face, “ this is, indeed, a heavy trial ; to part with a child so lovely ! so amiable ! Yet how much deeper would be my agony, did I not know, that the very virtues which have thus entwined themselves around the hearts of her family, and render her loss still greater, secure her own happiness ! Think what would be my anguish as a parent, at this bitter hour, if I thought the child I so much love would soon exchange her earthly sufferings for eternal sorrows ! If when she leaves me I had no reason to flatter myself that she would not pass into regions of darkness and woe ! You will

be a mother, and never, never let it be effaced from your memory, that the everlasting happiness or misery of your children rests on you.

Yes, it is my consolation, and the only one that bears me up under this dispensation, that I ever endeavoured to make my children sensible, that they were here only travellers to another country—that the world ought neither to be the goal of their hopes, nor entered upon as a scene of pleasure ; and I have already received a part of my reward. Only this morning I learnt that Maria's illness was of such a nature she could not survive many months, and I resolved to inform her immediately of her situation, that she might not lose a moment of that time now so peculiarly precious. I knew that my child, from her age, amiable disposition and situation, had none of the deeper crimes of the world to deplore ; but while it was a task that almost shook my frame to dissolution, I dared not incur the heavy responsibility of deceiving her at such a time—of robbing her, by my selfish grief, of the opportunity of *brightening* her crown of glory. Death is an awful visitant—even my Maria found it so : she requested her brother to carry her to her room,

and desired to be left alone till she rang her bell. He silently obeyed her wishes, and we spent in grief that time she was employed in teaching the feelings of shuddering nature to submit to the doom of mortality. In a few hours the fluttered spirit was lulled to resignation, and after tenderly thanking me for the fortitude I had evinced, she requested her brother would accompany her in her usual airing on the shore. My child I now therefore consider rather as the inhabitant of another world, than as a denizen of this ; and in her patient submission to the will of Heaven, I find a melancholy pleasure that almost reconciles me to the deprivation of her society."

Felicia was much affected by this pious acquiescence in so severe a visitation. She had never visited the Berkelys without feeling them rise in her estimation, and, tears still trembling in her eyes, she at length reluctantly returned home.

The prospect of a visit to Mrs. Berkely was extremely agreeable to her ; for seven of the twelve months, which she had determined should elapse after Mrs. Beauclerc's death, ere she became a wife, remained unexpired ; and in de-

fiance of her wish to render Lady Wyedale every dutiful attention, her incessant complainings, and ill-humour were so wearisome, that she contemplated a little escape from them with peculiar satisfaction. The sound of Rosalind's voice in high glee as she ascended the stairs, and the sight of Lady Wyedale's face composed into an expression bordering on good-humour, gave her encouragement to communicate where she had been, and to express her hopes that Lady Wyedale would permit her to accompany Mrs. Berkely to Elm-grove early the next week. When she accepted Mrs. Berkely's invitation, she was not without fear that she should hear much of an unpleasant nature from Lady Wyedale on its being announced, but had never anticipated the possibility of her Ladyship's refusing to sanction her visit: she was consequently much mortified when her Ladyship exclaimed, every feature dark as Erebus, "I am really astonished how you could think of accepting such an invitation, aware as you are of my invincible dislike to that woman; and I insist upon it you do not go with her to Elm-grove.—You know Elm-grove is only three miles from the Lodge,

and if you were to spend a few months with her there, it must lay me under an obligation to her, and bring on an intimacy I have been for years trying to discourage."

Felicia cast an imploring look at Rosalind; but Rosalind was not in the smallest degree induced to second her cause. She was sensible that if Felicia left them, she could not as now partake of every amusement without restraint or reproach.

Rosalind's natural feelings were warm, generous, and affectionate; but intercourse with the gay world had already blunted their finest edge; and though far from destitute of *bienveillance*, she knew not how to tread the rugged path of self-denial, even for Felicia's sake.

"I am a little astonished at your extreme attachment to these said Berkelys," she observed, seeing her sister's chagrin, "who belong to the class of mighty good people; in my opinion, just the most disagreeable beings in the whole universe. It is not only that their own peculiarities render them beyond measure stupid, but they must be so outrageously virtuous to keep up the farce—so shocked at the sins of others, and so little hurt at their own—

so lynx-eyed to perceive the heinous offence of going to a ball, so insensible to that of backbiting and slandering their neighbours !”

“ Whenever I perceive in the Berkelys any of those distinguishing traits, which are, it seems, characteristic of the ‘ mighty good ‘ people,’ my attachment will subside,” said Felicia, for the first time hurt at Rosalind’s refusing to comply with her wishes, and the continual efforts she made to lower her friends in the estimation of Evanmore, whose silence during this argument had been too expressive of his secret sentiments respecting her intended visit. She quitted the room as she spoke, and had just seated herself dejectedly in her own, when the door opened, and Rosalind advanced with her hands held up in the attitude of supplication. Felicia turned aside her head as from the blandishment of a syren.

“ Philly,” she cried, squeezing herself into the half of her sister’s chair, and folding her arms around her waist, “ let not your righteous spirit be disturbed because I don’t love the Berkelys. Even when that most delectable *morçeau* of goodness, John, was a kind of lover of mine, I—”

“Oh, that he were one now!” said Felicia, unable any longer to feel resentment against one so dear, so captivating.

“Indeed, I do not: I should by no means wish any thing so wondrous wise to be related to me. A man that is neither a Solomon nor a saint, is much more calculated for such everyday mortals as myself. Depend upon it, my dear, something more like your spouse elect is better designed to make matrimony agreeable. One might hope to acquire the dominion of such a one by a little judicious contrivance: seeming, for instance, to consult him (though all the while predetermined to have one’s own way)—or by a well-timed explosion, now and then, on a great occasion much may be done. But Berkely! he would be proof against flattery, foolery, and fire. Such sturdy reasoners, and moralists are neither to be led nor driven, as the old adage expresses,—down-right obstinacy!”

The praises of those we love, are more grateful than the most refined flattery bestowed on ourselves; and, yet this seemingly disinterested generous feeling may spring from a selfish motive. We are delighted to think that our opi-

nion is confirmed by that of the world, our admiration sanctioned by that of our friends, and when we find the object of affection sinks in the scale of excellence, we feel a sensation of personal degradation. Felicia listened to these observations with mingled pain and astonishment. That Evanmore was, in Rosalind's estimation, "neither a Solomon nor a saint," was not, indeed, deserving of a moment's consideration; but still she had been so much in the habit of regarding him as a superior being, that she learnt, with secret surprise, he had failed to impress Rosalind with the same sentiments.

"Nay, don't look so dismal, my dear Philly," said Rosalind, whose quickness enabled her in a moment to perceive that she had suddenly and unpleasantly taught Felicia to know her lover was not, as she had delighted to fancy him, a being of entire perfection; "what I have said was merely to reconcile you to something more human than Berkely; and, I verily believe, you will be far happier with the one than the other. There should be no rivalry in matrimony. Now, Evanmore, though excessively good, and almost a saint, is not quite

one, therefore there can be no competition between you. But Berkely—he is a shining light; in time each might fear, that the dazzling rays of the other would throw a shade of obscurity on self; and diminished glory neither could like. The most brilliant lustre admits of being heightened by a foil, you know; don't therefore lament that poor Evanmore is a mere mortal man, for be assured he will admire your perfection the more; nor be angry with me for the hints I have just given you how to manage him. They emanated from the pure christian principle of doing as I would be done by, and to promote the good old cause transmitted from mother to daughter since the days of Madam Eve—at all events the generosity of my conduct is entitled to your gratitude, for I had no hope of reward—no—not the least of ever having any return of a similar nature from you; for I know you think it right in women to obey their husbands; and, without flattery, I esteem you to be so very an angel that I do—yes, I really do believe you will act up to your principles *even* on that point.”

“ Oh, Rosalind,” cried Felicia, “ that I could make you more serious on serious subjects—

that I could render you sensible that you will idly hope to experience happiness yourself, or meet it in your husband, while you thus treat the most sacred topics with levity, and seem to esteem virtue in him to whom you would unite your fate, of no moment."

"I dare say you do; but the fact is, that the time for instilling all those principles by which you are actuated is past.—We were differently brought up—you were taught to regard virtue as the only source of happiness: I, on the contrary, that carriages, servants, affluence, consequence, constitute the *summum bonum* of felicity; and that a coronet is an *elixir vitæ* for all the ills of life. My aunt Beauclerc, in short, educated you for the next world; my aunt Wyedale, me for this: it remains to be seen which of the two systems will best conduce to the future happiness of each; and as, beyond a shadow of doubt, I am not so good as yourself, would it not be unreasonable and presumptuous in me to aspire to any thing half so amiable as your *caro sposo* must, it seems, be? I own, if my lord and master makes me a kind husband, I shall be satisfied."

"What is your definition of a kind husband?" said Felicia.

“ Kind! why, perhaps I do not attach to it so comprehensive a meaning as you may; but I shall be contented, after the honeymoon is over, to find him like most other women’s kind husbands; that is, complaisant, good-tempered, generous, unsuspicious, and the like; and in return, I will be gay in spirits, decent in my deportment, tolerably circumspect in my private affairs, and not over curious or prying into his. Why, you look so disconsolate, I almost dread to leave you, for fear of your committing *felo-de-se*. Come along with me! and if you cannot achieve a visit to the Berkelys, at least have the satisfaction of looking surly at auntie Wyedale: there is some pleasure in that, after a defeat; and as to lamenting that I am what I am, your grief is, be assured, just as well placed as that of the old woman, who, when she had exhausted every other source of distress, sat down and wept for the sins of the Bishops.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Oh, Memory ! in thy magic glass
What various scenes and objects pass !
Retentive maid ! thine is the power
To brighten or o’ercast the hour.”

THERE was a witchery in Rosalind’s manner that acted as a talisman to disarm resentment ; and though each day tended to confirm Felicia in the belief that she was widely different from what she had fondly expected her, she knew not how to think harshly of errors whose source so evidently lay in a defective education ; and conscious that levity, not ill-will, had excited her momentary displeasure, she dismissed it as hastily as it had been awakened. But she could not so readily banish from her remembrance the unpleasing recollection, that Evanmore was considered by Rosalind in a very opposite point of view from what she had imagined. She knew Rosalind to be unusually quick in developing character, and

she had hoped, though Evanmore's compliance with all her whims had secured her attachment, she did not esteem him less firm in principle, or steady in virtue than Berkely himself. She had for some time seen Evanmore escort Rosalind to every varied scene of amusement with sensations that occasionally bordered on regret; because she half feared what he now performed from a mere desire to oblige her sister, and ingratiate himself with Lady Wyedale, might ultimately tend to give him a taste for such amusements, and incapacitate him for the quiet enjoyments of a life spent in the privacy of domestic peace. Still she had been unwilling to encourage this apprehension, lest it might deprive Rosalind of a protector, or arise from a source different to that to which she traced it. She knew the heart to be deceitful above all things; and an indistinct feeling of mortification, which once or twice thrilled through her heart on hearing Evanmore's rapturous praises of Rosalind's beauty, made her blush, from the apprehension that a little, petty, jealous desire of exclusive admiration and attention might be the origin of what she wished to ascribe to anxiety for Evanmore; and she

had, therefore, carefully refrained from breathing or indulging the most remote suspicion that Evanmore himself was a willing sharer in Rosalind's pleasures. For the first time she now slowly admitted this unwelcome truth, and reflected, with some uneasiness, on a remark of Mrs. Berkely's, which had not at that time excited a moment's surprise or alarm. When expressing her desire at their last parting, that Felicia should accompany her to Elmgrove, she said, "And in that case Mr. Evanmore will surely return home." Her manner was unimportant, but a meaning might lurk in her words which she had then been too much blinded by affection to penetrate. Was it possible, that Mrs. Berkely, like Rosalind, might not see in him that firmness of virtue it had been her pride to believe he possessed? Was it improbable, that she had perceived in his manner a something that led her to believe he had experienced too much satisfaction in accompanying Rosalind to those scenes of attraction of which she was so fond; and wished to learn, that he would fly them when she was no longer the companion of her sister? She wept from shame and vexation, as her recoiling mind re-

luctantly assented to these mortifying questions; and she determined, since Lady Wyedale's petulance precluded her from accepting Mrs. Berkely's invitation, she would carefully watch over Evanmore's conduct in future; and should she perceive he was indeed becoming too fond of scenes which prudence and principle equally required he should only occasionally frequent, she would conquer her unwillingness to give him a moment's uneasiness, and fairly point out the error into which his good-natured wish to oblige his intended sister-in-law might lead him. Having come to this determination, she resolved to banish from her bosom every unpleasant remembrance, and without suffering either her spirits or her judgment to be influenced by the past, keep a calm impartial eye on the future. But a system of *espionnage* is one of all others offensive to a generous mind; and that doubt which prompts it, of all others inimical to real happiness in the bosom of a lover. Without scarcely knowing why, Felicia felt her spirits imperceptibly decline. Vainly she tried to shake off this unaccountable depression.

"I have no reason to feel dejected," she

sometimes reasoned with herself; “Evanmore is as attached to me as when first he solicited my affections; and the nearer we approach to that period which will unite us in an indissoluble union, the dearer, I feel, he becomes to me. Why, then, should I suffer my mind to be overclouded with unreasonable apprehensions of I know not what?” Alas! Felicia was too little acquainted with the secret workings of the heart, to penetrate into the cause of that weight she vainly tried to shake off. She knew not that the hour which lifted from her mental vision the veil affection had fondly spread over him she loved,—the hand which first pointed out the failings of one she had delighted to think perfection, produced that change of feeling she deplored. Love, like self, is no impartial-judge; and those who are not careful to detect its subtlety, will often be led to rank almost as virtues in the beloved object, what in others would, without hesitation, be considered as errors. Felicia had strong principles, good abilities, and natural quickness of perception—but she was *scarcely twenty*—had warm affections, and an unsuspicious temper. All that education could give, all that wisdom could

impart, she had received ; but neither education, nor the experience of others, can extinguish the fervid romance of a young enthusiastic spirit ; and though Mrs. Beauclerc, with a smile, often told her she must not expect to find on a closer intimacy with Evanmore all those splendid virtues, and that unshaken principle with which she delighted to endow him, she could not bring herself to believe he would ever fall short of the elevation she had assigned him, or deceive her expectations. Evanmore she had known almost from childhood ; for during an indisposition of Mrs. Beauclerc's, they had each spent a month at the house of a mutual acquaintance ; and when in after-life they continued occasionally to meet, every interview seemed to confirm their juvenile attachment. They appeared, indeed, designed for a closer and dearer intercourse ; for Evanmore, besides all those personal attractions which are calculated to win affection, possessed a high reputation, and seemed, even on those graver subjects, which are so seldom an object of reflection to young men, to entertain the same opinions as his Felicia. Long had he been the secret object of Felicia's regard, before he ven-

tured to solicit she would crown his affection; and when at length their union received the sanction of her aunt, Felicia felt as if worldly misfortune could never be a visitor at her door. She loved him with that purity, that devotedness, which a first affection is apt to awaken. No obstacles had arisen to damp the ardour of her attachment: his image had been the first imprinted on her glowing heart, and she believed death only could obliterate it. Nor was Evanmore undeserving of her love, for he returned it with scarcely less warmth; and though he was not the perfect being she deemed him, the weak points of his character had a tendency so amiable, that they eluded the eye of those who witnessed his many virtues, and always mitigated the severity of reproof even when perceived. Evanmore was, in truth, an assemblage of all that renders man dear and estimable; but his lustre was darkened by a few shades impervious to the dazzled sight of love. He had not that firmness and stability of character which *ensures* perseverance in the path of rectitude; but possessed a morbid sensibility that made almost death appear less intolerable to him, than the laugh or sneer of an acquaint-

ance. When attachment to Felicia impelled him to leave his paternal mansion, and take lodgings in London, to beguile away the twelve months which Felicia deemed it respectful to the memory of an almost parent should elapse ere their union took place, he thought he should never become even reconciled to the habits of Felicia's gay relations, and panted for the time to arrive when they would mutually escape from the unrelenting ill-humour of Lady Wyedale, and the unceasing dissipation of her house. But Evanmore, like ductile wax, easily received an impression from those with whom chance or circumstances threw him in contact; and after a few weeks spent in the pursuit of pleasure, with Rosalind for his companion, he began to think his new mode of existence not so very irksome, though he still looked forwards to his emancipation with delight. A few months removed all but his wish to find himself the husband of Felicia—there he remained firm and consistent. He esteemed her the most amiable of women; and though hurt at discovering that she possessed not the shining beauty of her sister, his love and his good sense equally conspired to render her still the sole object of

his affections. Once or twice he was not, indeed, quite sure, whether she would not be more agreeable, if more like Rosalind in manner; and once or twice he had felt a latent emotion, somewhat resembling alarm, lest that strict piety and that keen sense of decorum which so often exposed her to Rosalind's raillery, might not be carried a little too far. But these were those momentary feelings and opinions which are infused we know not how into the mind, and rejected with disdain as soon as they become perceptible to our reason. The depression of spirits under which she laboured, he at length perceived, but he ascribed it to Lady Wyedale's harshness, united to her seclusion from those amusements which, he had now learnt to think, were essential to the happiness of young persons; and influenced by this idea, entreated her to join Rosalind and himself more frequently than she had previously done.

Felicia heard him with fond attention; but the remedy he proposed had not the effect he desired: she had, however, too much native sweetness of temper to meet these proofs of his attachment without corresponding marks of reciprocal regard, and too much good sense

when she refused compliance with his wishes, unequivocally to assign her real motives. She knew that those who wish to *succeed* on *such points* should try the power of persuasion and the force of argument, veiled from the sight, but naked to the understanding, before they have recourse to those stronger measures which may disgust by their unpalatableness. She was sensible that even *love* cannot fetter *opinion*; though judiciously exerted, it most commonly influences it; and, that the least exercise of authority is sure to strengthen what reasoning may probably annihilate. A scrutiny of a few weeks duration had convinced her, that Evanmore was not a reluctant partaker of Rosalind's joys; and fearing lest too rigid an adherence to her own sentiments might defeat her wishes, she consented to accompany him three or four times to different scenes of public amusement.

Evanmore was gratified by her acquiescence; and as she always appeared to enjoy the evening on such occasions nearly as much as Rosalind, he flattered himself time would render her as fond of plays, balls, and concerts as he desired. Felicia, in the mean time, omitted no opportunity of gently representing that such

scenes ought to be partaken of only with great moderation, lest their frequency should vitiate the taste for simpler enjoyments, and induce a gradual inclination for expensive pleasures, alike incompatible with their residence in a retired village and limited fortune. But Evanmore listened at first without seeming to comprehend her meaning, and when he was at length helped to it by the ready Rosalind, he only felt some additional uneasiness lest Felicia should push her practice so much beyond that of other people as to become particular; and next to actual positive sins, Evanmore had a horror of particularities. She did not, however, interfere with him; and he felt he had no right to question a line of conduct which might arise from Lady Wyedale's indisposition, and, as she often told him, from a disinclination to mingle frequently in those crouds where Rosalind, to use her own language, only lived.

While these were the sentiments and views of Felicia and her lover, Rosalind was continuing her attack on Mr. Osborne with distinguished success. No blandishments, however, could soften Lord Edgermond's heart—no prospect of a rival rouse the apathetic indiffer-

ence with which he seemed to see her; and, exasperated, astonished, and mortified, Rosalind at length began to resign all hope of adorning her brows with his envied coronet. As this hope died away, Mr. Osborne grew a more estimable conquest; and daily, hourly, she expected he would solicit her hand, with a feeling of disappointment at his delay, which augured not unfavourably for his suit. But day succeeded day, still Mr. Osborne forbore to announce himself a captive, though his attentions were of such a nature as left no doubt of his intentions. He was in short unwilling to expose himself to being laughed at as a rejected admirer, and, with the natural diffidence of a real lover, almost apprehensive he should scarcely be deemed a sufficient match for a woman so exquisitely beautiful, highly connected, and the presumptive heiress to Lady Wyedale's large fortune. He was, therefore, resolved to be certain of her affection ere he ventured to declare his passion; and his caution, though from different motives, was warmly commended by his cousin, Mrs. Hustleton. A few months ago she would have opposed his marrying her young enemy Rosalind Leycester

by every effort malice or ingenuity could devise ; because she not only personally disliked her, but knew Lady Wyedale's capricious temper too well not to feel assured that all hopes of dependance on her were so light, a breath of wind might scatter them in a moment. But Rosalind's avowal of independence from Mrs. Beauclerc, together with Lady Wyedale's marked preference of her to Felicia, had produced a considerable change in her sentiments. She now began to believe Rosalind would really inherit her Ladyship's possessions ; and was aware, that as such, she must be esteemed a most advantageous connexion for her relation. Mr. Osborne was her favourite cousin, for he was her richest and greatest, and from that principle, which too often impels us to press on the prosperous those gifts we should never think of offering to the needy, she had long felt a secret determination to add her fourteen thousand pounds to the sixty he already possessed. The prospect of his forming so gratifying an alliance, decided her views in his favour. She was not insensible to the consequence such a union would reflect upon herself ; and by dexterously holding out this golden bait, she felt that Ro-

salind's propensity to satirize her would be held in check; besides which, regard to her own personal importance would impel her to conceal all that might tend to lower her husband's family. Her fears, therefore, hushed, and her vanity awakened by the prospect of Lady Wyedale's heiress becoming her relation, she saw Rosalind's acceptance of his attentions with secret pride and delight; and only recommended, that Mr. Osborne should not avow himself before he had secured a place in her heart, lest his precipitancy might throw away his present hopes of success.

While such were the motives that influenced the conduct of Rosalind and her humble adorer, Lady Wyedale received an invitation to a grand private ball given by a personage of the first importance. Her Ladyship's vanity proved too strong for the dictates of reason, and in despite of her indisposition, she resolved to *chaperone* Rosalind herself. The discontinuance of Lord Edgermond's attentions had been perceived by her with almost as much pain as by her niece; and she was not without hopes his meeting her there, blazing with jewels, and glowing in beauty, might induce him to

make one effort to snatch the prize so likely to be wrested from him for ever. These views secretly animated Rosalind's bosom also ; and, like some able general, whose hopes of victory rest on one decisive engagement, she resolved to consolidate her forces, and employ them all on this important occasion.

All that art could supply, to decorate a form on which nature had lavished her richest gifts, was exhausted, and as she surveyed her captivating figure in a large pier glass, Rosalind felt a proud conviction that it would be impossible for Lord Edgermond to behold her with indifference. Her bosom throbbing with expectation, her heart elate with conscious beauty, she at length found herself in the scene of so much expected glory, and impatiently waited his Lordship's appearance. Some time elapsed ere he entered the room—some more before he seemed to be aware she was there ; and a long period intervened between his bow of recognition, and a soft but formal

“ Ah, Miss Rosalind ! I am happy to see Lady Wyedale is sufficiently recovered to be here. Engaged, I suppose, for all the evening ? ” as

he gracefully passed her to lead out a lovely young woman to a quadrille.

Rosalind's blood rushed from her heart to her cheeks, and circled there again with a feeling of coldness that instantly damped its former warmth. In the ease with which he addressed her, and *nonchalance* of his manner, she beheld the death-blow to her hopes, and absorbed in mortification, saw not that the dances were commenced without having been solicited to join the festive party. She soon, however, awoke to a sense of the indignity she had received, and burning with blushes of shame and indignation, panted for the conclusion of that evening she had been so impatiently anticipating. Rosalind was, indeed, for the first time, doomed to experience personal slight. In the elevated sphere of which she was now a member, she had few acquaintance; and beautiful as she was, she found herself surrounded by a host of rivals whose rank as well as charms entitled them to a greater share of attention than even herself. Before the evening concluded, she had indeed several opportunities of dancing, but her spirit had been too much wounded by Lord Edgermond's indifference, and a previous

sense of neglect, to permit her to recover from her mortification. She had been that most melancholy lonely creature, known among young people by the appellation of a "wall flower;" and incensed at Lord Edgermond, degraded in her own estimation, left the room a prey to as much misery as can be felt by those who are innocent of having committed any crime.

After a sleepless night she arose, found Mr. Osborne at the breakfast-table, more obsequious, more devoted than on any previous occasion; and despairing of ever subduing Lord Edgermond, doubtful for the first time of the omnipotency of her charms, she accepted the offer he had the good fortune at that moment to tender.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ She never knew nor sought to know
Of faith sincere the grateful glow.”

LADY WYEDALE was secretly displeased with Rosalind's unexpected acceptance of Mr. Osborne. She had not been averse to her having the *eclat* of such an admirer, but as it was her secret intention to make her the heiress of her fortune, she felt disappointed that she should, at nineteen, consent to unite herself to a man whose personal consequence was inferior to her own, and whose fortune, though a large one, not more considerable than Rosalind's at her death. But this was an objection she could not make without declaring her intentions in Rosalind's favour; and her Ladyship was so jealous a lover of that prudent caution which leaves unfettered caprice to pursue its vacillating humours, that she would not for the

world have done more than give a sort of ambiguous hint, that, "if Rosalind behaved well, and nothing induced her to alter her present intention, she believed she would have cause to remember her with gratitude." But this she felt aware, was not quite enough to induce Rosalind to relinquish a man possessed of three thousand a year of his own, with the hope of more in perspective. Unable, therefore, to assign any plausible reason for her opposition, yet determined not to bind herself, by avowing the one that influenced her, she gave a surly consent to Mr. Osborne's application; and found her only consolation for this mortification in increased petulance, and augmented lamentations of growing indisposition.

"Philosophers tell us, every evil has its remedy, every poison its antidote; but your aunt knows no remedy for the ills of life, but complaint," said Evanmore, one day, to Felicia.

"Alas! she looks not beyond this world for consolation. Can we therefore wonder? Dear Evanmore," she continued, fondly placing her hand on his arm, "let not the awful lesson be taught us in vain. If we permit our affections to be engrossed by the pleasures and pursuits

of this transitory sphere, we, like my poor aunt, shall soon cease to look for any other, and as they gradually fade away from our grasp, become, like her, the victims of peevishness and discontent."

"True, my dear Felicia. I trust we shall never omit any known duty; but indeed, my love, I almost fear you are carrying your religious scruples too far. Religion was never intended to circumscribe the innocent enjoyments of the world; and surely there cannot be a more rational or a more pleasing amusement than a good play, or a lively ball; yet you know you refused to accompany your sister and myself to the theatre last night; and though you did not assign any other reason than disinclination, I know you declined merely from a superstitious motive."

"I had been, you must remember, the week before."

"But then only in compliance with my earnest request."

"Granted. And did that diminish the pleasure you felt at my assent?"

"No," said he, tenderly taking her hand, as he saw a tear start to her eye. "But I own

I could almost have wished that on such a point my Felicia had required no entreaties."

"I had not intended to allude to my sentiments on these topics, nor am I at all competent to enter into a controversial vindication of them; but I will reply to you in the language of one whose splendid talents and exemplary conduct justly render her a luminous beacon to guide the rest of her sex.

* "If some things which are apparently innocent, and do not assume an alarming aspect, or bear a dangerous character,—things which the generality of decorous people affirm (how truly we know not) to be safe for them; yet if we find that these things stir up in us improper propensities; if they awaken thoughts which ought not to be excited; if they abate our love for religious exercises or infringe on our time for performing them; if they make spiritual concerns appear insipid; if they wind our heart a little more about the world; in short, if we have formerly found them injurious to our souls, then let no example or persuasion, no belief of their alleged innocence, no plea of their

* *Vide* Practical Piety, p. 126.

perfect safety, tempt us to indulge in them. It matters little to our security what they are to others. Our business is with ourselves. Our responsibility is on our own heads. Others cannot know the side on which we are assailable. Let our own unbiassed judgment determine our opinion; let our own experience decide for our own conduct.' ”

“ Now, my dearest Evanmore, after seriously giving these striking remarks my unprejudiced consideration, I thought it my duty, as much as I could, to avoid, without singularity, all public amusements; for I have found them too delightful to be wholly innocent. After my return from such scenes, my mind has been too much engrossed by the events of the evening, to allow me to perform my devotional exercises with the same unbroken attention I usually discharge them; and in the morning, fatigue generally produces the same effect. Even through the succeeding day, the glare of the lights, the sound of the music, the pleasures of the scene, still retain so much power over my senses, that I turn with distaste from the sober employments of my station. Ought I then *often* to partake of what may indeed be *safe for*

others, but which experience tells me is dangerous to me?"

"Well, my love, far be it from me to urge you to do any thing you esteem wrong," said he, with a half-suppressed yawn. "Still, however, I lament that your feelings are so little in unison with those of the world in general. Nor can I help thinking, even the passage you have quoted savours a little too strongly of Calvinistic austerity."

"Oh, Evanmore, do not say so!" cried Felicia, her face for the first time expressing something like displeasure. "Remember the happiness we all enjoyed while you read aloud *Cœlebs* to my dear aunt and myself, and how entirely you then coincided in all her sentiments and views."

"Did I? Well, I believe I might. But you know, dearest Felicia, we were then very young; and though Mrs. Beauclerc was undoubtedly a most excellent woman, yet I conceive she carried her practice farther than was absolutely necessary. Certainly beyond that of any other person; and let us not be uncharitable enough to believe no one can be saved unless they are equally perfect; because that would be to con-

demn to misery more than half our fellow-creatures. Let us hope we shall all meet again, though we do not exactly pursue the same path ;” and with this hope, the rock on which thousands have been lost, the argument ended ; for Rosalind hastily interrupted it, to request Evanmore would drive her on the sands to see a donky-race, on which large sums were betted by two gentlemen, who had so much money they knew not how to contrive common methods of getting rid of it.

In the fond respectful attentions of Mr. Osborne, and the novelty incident to her situation in being for the first time the acknowledged arbitress of the fate of man, Rosalind derived some consolation under Lord Edgermond’s desertion. Even the servile adulation of Mrs. Hustleton, and the prospect of succeeding to her fortune, were not without their attractions.

“ Well, after all,” said she one morning, when Mrs. Hustleton’s flatteries had soothed her into that complacency which Lord Edgermond’s behaviour had lately somewhat disturbed, “ I really believe she is a good-hearted woman. We have all our faults, and to be sure she is very curious, very prosy, and very

tenacious of attention, perhaps more than, all things considered, she has a strict right to expect; but she is now independent; and in a commercial country like this, trade is no disgrace, and riches a passport to every society. Sometimes, to be sure, she has provoked me a little I own; but then you know, Felicia, one ought not to cherish resentful feelings." And as she uttered this truism, she looked so satisfied with her own goodness, that Felicia could scarcely repress a smile.

"How deceitful is the heart!" she thought. "How ingenious self-love! Rosalind is now deriving pleasure from thinking she is exercising a Christian virtue, when the fact is simply, that her engagement to Mr. Osborne is the sole cause of that sudden revolution in her ideas which induces her to view, without her usual contempt, foibles she has so often held up to ridicule."

But though she had failed to impose upon her sister as to her motives, Rosalind was quite deceived herself. Little habituated to analyze her reasons or examine her own heart, and accustomed to think she was the most open, good-tempered creature in the world, she would

have started with indignation and astonishment, had any one attempted to prove, that when she condescended to conciliate Lady Wyedale after a quarrel, or felt any sudden alteration in her opinions, the change had been brought about by any but the most amiable, disinterested views; and perfectly unconscious that her own personal interest and instinctive hopes of future benefit had contributed to, if not entirely effected this favourable change in her opinion of Mrs. Hustleton, she ran on descanting upon the sin of unforgiveness, the folly of bearing malice; till, as she advanced in her dissertation, warmed by the vehemence of her arguments, she not only felt convinced she was herself the most relenting being in existence, but believed the many virtues which she suddenly brought forward to overbalance the heavy weight of imperfections which she had formerly laid to Mrs. Hustleton's charge, really existed; and reflected equal credit upon their possessor, and her who so generously revealed them to an ill-natured, incredulous world.

During this long *tirade*, Felicia felt rejoiced, that Rosalind, according to her general custom, required her merely to look at her to be satis-

fied they were carrying on a conversation ; for though she was resolved not to controvert what she knew it would be Rosalind's interest to think true, she felt uninclined to add her praises to those so undeservedly lavished on Mrs. Hustleton, if all that Rosalind had previously told her bore the faintest stamp of veracity. Rosalind, however, on this occasion, was not disposed to rest satisfied with mute acquiescence ; and when she had finished explaining away Mrs. Hustleton's former errors, disguising those which, in spite of her wish to think otherwise, she knew could not be concealed, and magnifying those virtues she had persuaded herself she really did possess, she looked at Felicia with an eye that expressed her expectation of hearing some rejoinder. Felicia was silent.

“ We must forget and forgive the failings of our friends, if we wish to have any,” said she, in a half-reproachful tone.

“ Certainly,” said Felicia, happy to be able to give her cordial concurrence here, at least.

But Rosalind was not contented ; something she thought lurked behind ; and never thinking it probable that Felicia might find some little difficulty in thus suddenly reconciling her mind to

the contrary accounts she had so often received of her future relative, she left the room with a conviction, that "your religious people, after all, know no charity but alms-giving;" and well assured that she was the better Christian, though she made the less pretence, began to dress for a party at Mrs. Hustleton's, given in honour of her intended entrance into the family.

The amazement with which Felicia at first beheld this flagrant instance of self delusion, at length gave way to the conviction that these laboured encomiums on a woman so lately the object of her unqualified dislike, must be used to disguise from herself her secret consciousness from whence they sprung, and justify a sudden partiality which she feared might be ascribed to some hidden and less honourable motive. At all events, she viewed it as a proof that Rosalind seriously meant to fulfil her engagement to Mr. Osborne, which she had hitherto doubted, and was, she trusted, indicative of a degree of regard for him which she had not before given her credit for feeling. For, in defiance of Rosalind's wish to appear gay and perfectly indifferent to Lord Edger-

mond's estrangement, her flushed cheek, when his name reached her ear, and embarrassed manner when they met, had conveyed to the anxious Felicia a suspicion that she still saw him with interest; and induced an apprehension, either that she would find means of dissolving her connexion with Mr. Osborne, or would marry him from pique. Influenced by this consideration, she had once or twice tried to penetrate into Rosalind's secret sentiments, but without success. Rosalind, gay, volatile, and good-humoured by nature, was not incapable of giving a "withering" look, or resenting what she deemed an impertinent question; and though she really loved Felicia, on this subject she would not endure to hear even her.

Artifice, and what are called deep strokes of worldly policy, often lead to consequences entirely unlooked for by their author. Lady Wyedale had no idea, when she thought it a profound piece of wisdom to weaken the cords of mutual confidence between the sisters, that she would be the first sufferer by the success of her stratagems. She would now have rejoiced at Felicia's possessing sufficient influence over her sister to deter her from forming an alliance

with a man she evidently did not love, in revenge for having been slighted by one she did. But though Felicia's natural sensibility, strong understanding, gentle manners, and purity of design rendered her peculiarly calculated to act the part of a judicious counsellor, her Ladyship's plot had too well succeeded to render her arguments, however effective, of the least weight with Rosalind. She loved Felicia, but she had been taught to esteem her a bigot, an enthusiast, and a person unacquainted with the manners and customs of genteel life in the nineteenth century ; and though acquaintance removed a part of the prejudice which Lady Wyedale wished to infuse into her mind, she still considered her as an ascetic, whose visionary opinions on all worldly subjects, it would be the acme of folly to be guided by.

It was now the close of Autumn : October had commenced with a degree of severity that threatened a cold stormy winter, and most of the gay visitors of Brighton deserted its shores before Lady Wyedale acquired courage to commence her journey homewards. The effort she, however, felt must be made, and after many bitter lamentations, and many querulous

complaints of the hardness of her destiny, she at length stepped into her splendid chariot, convinced, because she was beginning to be subject to the labour and sorrow which all must experience, if they survive the period of youth, that she was the most unfortunate woman in the universe, and visited by sufferings and calamities which justly entitled her to render all around her miserable, by her ill-humour and impatience.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Life is a waste of wearisome hours,
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns!
And the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers,
Is always the first to be touch'd by the thorns.”

FELICIA's return to London was an event hailed by both Jenny and herself with the sincerest pleasure. The former had become satiated with those delights which, alone, Rosalind declared she was capable of enjoying; and Felicia believed, that a removal from the allurements of Brighton, united to her situation as an engaged woman, would not merely deprive Rosalind of the desire of mingling so much in public, but gradually alienate Evanmore from pleasures which, she feared, would hereafter render his residence in the country insipid, and give him a taste for expensive amusements which his fortune would be unable to gratify.

But Felicia, from continually exercising the duty of self-examination, was a much better judge of her own character than that of others; and in both these opinions, the result proved her totally mistaken. It is a commonly received notion, that those who are permitted to mingle in scenes of pleasure and dissipation, will in time see their fallacy, and if they do not become weary of their evanescent attractions, at least learn to view them with such indifference, that they become perfectly uninjurious. But on carefully investigating this opinion, does it appear founded in truth or experience? May not acquaintance with their splendors and enjoyments tend to increase the natural taste of man for luxury and all the soft blandishments of sense, rather than diminish his reluctance to partake of them; and, accustomed to such excitements, may not the mind (as the appetite fed on *piquant* sauces and high dishes at length loathes the plainness of food which has little more to recommend it than its wholesomeness) become disgusted with those quiet enjoyments which ignorance of any other might invest with greater power to gratify?

Rosalind and Evanmore, at all events, were

no instances of its wisdom. Rosalind, who had been early initiated, was, indeed, to a certain degree palled by satiety, and had lost the high relish which novelty confers on every pleasure. But still they were preferable to the insupportable lassitude and *ennui* she endured while passing an evening at home. Their own attraction was gone, but they yet possessed power to awaken her vanity, and gratify that feverish thirst of admiration which continual flattery had made a constitutional disease of her mind; while Evanmore, delighted with their illusions, saw not their frivolity—feared not their danger.

The love of admiration—the desire of applause is not exclusively confined to the fair sex; and Evanmore, though he tried to hide it from himself, was not wholly insensible to the attention which his graceful person, refined manners, and pleasing features procured him, when he escorted his future sister-in-law to scenes, where such personal endowments are of higher importance than all the wisdom of all the ancients. A very few weeks, therefore, served to convince Felicia of the fallacy of her speculations, and with a heavy heart, she at length

reluctantly admitted the idea, that Evanmore felt too much happiness in amusements she disapproved. It was combined with another scarcely less mortifying—more than he ought to feel out of her society. A glow, something like resentment, tinged her cheek, as this reflection passed over her mind; but resentment is not long retained against one on whom we sincerely depend for happiness; and Felicia quickly endeavoured to dismiss from her bosom a sensation so injurious to her peace.

Winter, which Felicia had ever considered the season of particular happiness, was now set in, but came unattended with those peculiar delights which had hitherto rendered it dear to her. The howling of the storm, to which she used to listen with mingled feelings of romantic pleasure and of pious gratitude, that she was preserved from its inclement blasts, was lost amid the din of the metropolis. The long evening, enlivened by the blazing fire and delightful book, or spent in the society of a few chosen friends, was now devoted to the garish joys of public places, or a heartless interchange of visits with persons who cared not whether to-morrow's dawn should consign

each other to the grave. At Leominster Felicia had been taught to consider every hour a sacred gift from Heaven, for which she must hereafter render a strict account ; but in the fashionable world she learnt, that to kill Time was the great purpose of life, and to banish the recollection of Him from whom it proceeded, the highest proof of mental superiority. At Leominster she had been instructed to read a moral in each little flower, and cultivate, by every effort of her understanding, an acquaintance with her Creator. In London, it seemed the acme of human ingenuity to banish in the pleasures of this world, the remembrance of the next.

As she made these observations, she tried to withdraw Evanmore yet more from scenes that she felt persuaded, could afford no real happiness here, and might ultimately deprive him of the still higher joys that awaited him hereafter. But Evanmore had himself gradually learnt to regard her as a little of a devotee ; and though he would not for the world have knowingly given her a moment's pain, he thought her a little unreasonable in wishing to prevent him from participating in amusements which he consi-

dered innocent. The time was now fast arriving when they must be relinquished from necessity ; and, persuading himself it was his duty to discourage such foolish scruples in his wife, he met her half-expressed fears with smiles, or regrets, at her refusing to accompany him where he felt mentally determined to persist in going.

After instilling into Felicia's infant bosom a knowledge of the fundamental truths of Christianity, it had been Mrs. Beauclerc's chief care to implant a strong principle of active benevolence. She was no admirer of that sickly sensibility which exhausts itself in tears at a theatre, or in sighs over a romance ; and turned with contempt and disgust from those speculative theorists, who rest satisfied that they are the most benevolent of human beings, because they wish impossibilities, and all mankind prosperous, without lightening by their exertions the weight of a single individual misery. Felicia's heart was naturally open as the day to melting charity ; and under the judicious control of such a preceptress, her natural tendency was converted into a fixed and settled principle, which influenced her to embrace

every opportunity of benefiting those to whom Providence, for wise, but inscrutable reasons, had been less bountiful than to herself. At Leominster she had never been at a loss for objects on whom to bestow the sum she yearly deducted from her little allowance of pocket-money; but in London, where she was a stranger, and apprehensive of misapplying that which she justly considered a deposit from heaven, she had found some difficulty in exercising this favourite virtue. She therefore deputed to Jenny the task of finding out some distressed family, from whose lips she might remove, if possible, a little of the bitterness of that cup of misfortune they were compelled to drink; and Jenny, not only instinctively inclined to all that is good, but, proud of the consequence thus reflected on herself, soon discovered various unhappy beings to whom her young mistress extended the hand of assistance. One of them was a poor woman labouring under an internal complaint, which required such continual support, that Felicia, unwilling to deprive herself of the opportunity of befriending any other, at length resolved to solicit Rosalind to unite with herself in affording her such

aid as her situation demanded. She stated the case, and Rosalind instantly flew to the drawer in her cabinet, which contained her purse.

“Felicia!” cried she, suddenly turning towards her with an embarrassed air, “I am afraid you will think me a little *avaricieuse*, but really this is all I can give you,” extending four or five shillings as she spoke. “I see you are disappointed, and so am I; for I was not before aware of the extent of my poverty. You are sceptical as to the fact, but see”—and she suspended her purse by the tassel at its bottom—“not a *sous* left in!”

“No, I am not sceptical;” said Felicia, “I was only wondering what had become of the twenty pounds I saw in your possession a few days ago, and lamenting that my dear Rosalind does not appropriate some part of her liberal income to the distresses of her fellow-creatures.”

“Cease to feel the vulgar sensation of amazement, then, and learn that the twenty pounds, with twenty more after it, went to purchase the lovely French watch you so strenuously advised me *not* to make my own. I did not show it to you for that reason; but

here it is ; a little beauty ! And as to appropriating a portion of my immense possessions, as you call an income that never half supplies my own wants, I must fairly tell you, though I never refuse to give when I happen to have the *sine quâ non*, I really do not see alms-giving in the same light you do ; and from experience can positively assert, that the poor are very ungrateful for what they do obtain.”

“ If you expect, in return for any chance casual act of generosity, the sentimental impassioned gratitude which you receive, after conferring some trifling favour on Mr. Osborne, you will be miserably disappointed ; but if you can be content with the plain acknowledgments of sincerity, and the consciousness of doing your own duty, you will be amply gratified. Be assured the poor are seldom ungrateful for that steady attention to their wants which bespeaks a heart interested in their sufferings, though they may not clothe it in the elegant language, or adorn it with the finished periods, and declamatory eloquence of—” she paused, Rosalind supplied the chasm—“ Lord Edgermond !—Well, don’t colour so ! I know you were inadvertently led on by your elo-

quence to a forbidden topic, and I forgive it. Perhaps there may be some justice in your remarks: I am, however, afraid I shall never attain to such a pitch of perfection myself, as to incline me to make the necessary exertions to prove their truth. It would require so much fuss and trouble to entitle myself to their good opinion, that I should never find leisure for it."

"Yet I seldom hear you complain of want of time to attend auctions, pay morning visits, shop when you don't want to purchase, and—"

"Oh, admitted! admitted! admitted! I am aware I am no saint; but all lights are not guiding stars, and, perhaps, now and then a beacon may be as useful as a planet."

"Heaven forbid that my Rosalind should be any other than a safe and honourable luminary," said Felicia, while a tear stole into her eye.

"Come, dearest Philly, don't let my sins metamorphose thee into a Niobe. Besides, I assure you, I actually have some thoughts of being good by-and-bye. I am, indeed, positive I shall be fit for canonization in ten years time, if I don't marry, for it is the road to one species of fame, after the gates of another are

shut, and I can never bear to be undistinguished even when old."

"The road to Fame!" repeated Felicia, in a tone of astonishment and concern. "Oh, Rosalind, where have you imbibed ideas so inimical to every right principle and feeling. Have we not a much stronger incentive to pursue the path of virtue; for is it not the way to Heaven? In the consciousness that our feeble attempts to imitate the attributes of the Deity are pleasing to Him in whom we live and move and have our being, whose hand confers on us every blessing we enjoy, is there not the most refined happiness?"

"I can only answer you as I have often done before, by saying, on these topics we cannot have an idea in common. I will, however, make one confession, and candidly acknowledge I have sometimes been half tempted to wish, when I view your serene countenance and tranquil composure, your elevation above the present scene, and your hopes of happiness in a future, I had been taught to think as you do—led to expect, in another state of existence, a refuge from the calamities of this. But the thing is now impossible. Don't, therefore,

weep, dear Philly, for in addition to the present distress it occasions me, I really dread to see you so very like an angel. You know there is an old adage about people being too good to live, and indeed you must not die, for it would grieve me more than I can describe, to lose you. How truly should I then say—" she paused a moment—her voice suddenly lost its lively expression, and she warbled with inimitable pathos and delicacy, in a low and plaintive air,

“ The warmest heart—the brightest eye,
Is earliest doom’d to love and die ;
The sweetest, gentlest, and the best,
Seek earliest out the land of rest.
The noblest mind, the bravest spirit,
Is briefly doom’d earth to inherit—
This world holds nought that’s worth the trust
Of woman’s love, since thou wert dust.”

There was a liquid sweetness in her tones, a tremulousness in her broken notes, and a softness in her glittering eye, that showed the words were felt as well as sung. They were part of a ballad Felicia had often admired, and she sat motionless, till seemingly ashamed of the new character in which she appeared. Rosalind

rapidly resumed her lost gaiety, and tapping her cheek, exclaimed, "If only to be the instrument of good to me, you must stay in this wicked world. What say you, Philly, to having me for a proselyte?"

"Oh, that I might!" cried Felicia, clasping her arms around her ivory neck. "Though every other earthly good should elude my grasp, I could live happily with such an object in view; and, when achieved, I could let the lovely spirit fly to its reward without a murmur, though it left me desolate and deserted."

"I should consider this from any body else down-right cant; but in you I know it is the *éloquence du cœur*, and I love you, my dear Felicia, more tenderly for the devotedness of your attachment. I advise you, however, to restrain these demonstrations of it as much as you can, for Lady Wyedale, who has lately become ten thousand times more disagreeable and tiresome than ever, seems just now particularly disposed to make you miserable; and as you can do no good to me, I wish you would not expose yourself by your zeal, to her malevolent remarks."

Felicia received this caution as it was in-

tended, and became more guarded in uttering those little indirect observations which she had hitherto often expressed with a view to effect what Rosalind told her, and she herself now began to fear, was hopeless. Lady Wyedale's increased unkindness to herself had not escaped her notice, or regret; and she vainly endeavoured to assign a cause for conduct so unprovoked and distressing. She knew her religious opinions were highly offensive to her Ladyship, and had long endeavoured, by mixing in society, by uniform silence on such subjects, and unvarying cheerfulness, to remove a part of her aunt's prejudices against them. She had never been able wholly to succeed; but, till within the last few weeks she had escaped open persecution. Now every topic, however begun, and however irrelevant, generally terminated with a dissertation on the absurdities and dangers of enthusiasm, and these provoking attacks were usually rendered more mortifying by being made in the presence of Evanmore.

"I am fond of music to excess," said Rosalind.

"Oh, pray don't love any thing to excess," said Lady Wyedale. "Even our attachments

and devotions should be under the dominion of reason.

“ Pious orgies, pious airs,
Decent sorrows, decent prayers.”

“ Miss Lucretia Beaumont is not deficient in her opinion of her own perfections, I think,” said Evanmore one day.

“ No,” replied Lady Wyedale, “ that is the error of the day. Young women acquire a smattering of knowledge on points with which it would be better if they were ignorant, and then, with the presumption of early years and inexperience, set up for lawgivers to the rest of the world.”

“ We should aim at perfection in whatever we attempt,” said Felicia, patiently leaning over the chair of Rosalind, to whom she was endeavouring to give a lesson in drawing.

“ Oh, dear no !” said Lady Wyedale, “ let us be satisfied with mediocrity. It is safer to walk in the valley, than climb the precipice. Besides, perfection, whether fancied or real, is apt to awaken presumption and self-love ; and no feelings can be more inimical to real piety—more dangerous to genuine christianity, though they are ever to be found in the breast

of an enthusiast." "Rosalind has many faults," said she one day, when her flippancy had exposed her to the severe reprimand of an elderly lady, who insisted upon her recanting some idle tale detracting from the honour of a beloved nephew; "but they are the errors of a warm heart, volatile spirit, and an open ingenuous character which time will correct. They may occasionally lead her into dilemmas, but they are infinitely preferable to the cold suspicions, the heartless prudence, the affected sanctity of premature age. Nothing is charming that is unnatural; it may surprise, but cannot long please."

If these oblique hints, seemed, from Felicia's usual composure of manner, to be lost upon her, a sly side-long glance, thrown as if inadvertently, pointed the innuendo to her. If, on the contrary, Felicia, in defiance of her endeavours, appeared hurt, she would compliment the sweetness of Rosalind's temper, which she declared (though she might be a little hasty sometimes) would enable her to brave the world.

As petty villainy often inflames to anger a mind that can preserve its equanimity under

injustice of real magnitude, so those injuries which, to any but the injured, are seemingly too trifling to resent, often inflict the deepest wounds — rankle longest in the heart; and it required all Felicia's native forbearance and self-command to avoid a reply to these provoking cowardly attacks, when stealing a look at Evanmore, she saw his cheek dyed, less with indignation at her aunt's unkindness, than shame at her supposed folly.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Or love me less, or love me more,
And play not with my liberty ;
Either take all, or all restore ;
Bind me at least, or set me free.
Let me some nobler torture find
Than of a doubtful wavering mind.”

MR. OSBORNE'S situation of course rendered him a frequent visitor in Russel-square ; and though his fair mistress received his attentions with a degree of *nonchalance* that might have been a little disheartening to some lovers, he was apparently perfectly satisfied. He had taken an elegant residence in one of the principal streets, and Rosalind sometimes condescended to inspect the improvements he was making in her future abode.

Lady Wyedale saw all these preparations with increased displeasure, as ominous of Rosalind's determination to enter the pale of

matrimony ; and to this cause might be ascribed a part of her ill-humour to Felicia. It was not, however, entirely the origin of that capricious malevolence which gave Felicia so much pain ; and excited in Evanmore's bosom so many apprehensions that she would, as she advanced in life, become a sour bigot, ready to deprive herself and him of every innocent enjoyment of life. Lady Wyedale was really indisposed, and contemplated with something like uneasiness, the arrival of that period which should consign her to the exclusive care of servants. She did not love Felicia ; and had Rosalind either remained with her, or formed such an alliance as she had for so many years proudly anticipated, she would have seen her the wife of Evanmore without a sentiment of regret. But she now wished for the continuance of her almost filial attentions ; and lamented that her union with a man of Evanmore's slender fortune would condemn her to more obscurity than even her sister. Had Felicia been unengaged, she would without hesitation have transferred to her that fortune so long destined to Rosalind ; and in the hope of her making some advantageous connexion

buried her mortification at Rosalind's failure. But this gratification of her feelings, resentments, and vanity, she saw it vain to expect. Felicia's attachment to Evanmore was evidently of too strong a nature to be shaken by any thing that she could offer; and additionally disgusted with principles that were not only so much at variance with her own, but inimical to her views, she found a malignant pleasure in making her the unceasing object of her persecution. Had her Ladyship imagined that these undeserved attacks on her defenceless niece were gradually paving the way to a total estrangement between her and Mr. Evanmore, she would probably have pursued them with an ardour that might have defeated their success; but unsuspecting, from the calm serenity with which Felicia bore them, that they really gave her extreme pain; or that she contemplated the effect they seemed to produce on her lover with much more; she continued to exercise her ingenuity with so little design that its impression became hourly more felt by both.

Felicia's temper and understanding naturally led her to extract the best and happiest ingredients from the mingled cup of human life, and

on every important occasion her conduct was guided by her principles ; but she possessed all the passions of human nature, and though she could forgive—sincerely forgive,—she was not insensible to unkindness or neglect. She felt she was ill-used ; and her bosom alternately swelled with grief or resentment, as she saw that Evanmore, in defiance of his continued protestations of attachment, did not secretly dislike Lady Wyedale's severity to her on such subjects.

“ Is it possible,” she thought, when one day her feelings had been unusually wounded by the behaviour of both, “ that Evanmore's sentiments have undergone a change ! Oh, no ! it cannot be !—Those principles which were implanted by the hand of a parent, and have hitherto influenced his conduct through life, can never be uprooted by the frivolous remarks, the contemptible sneers of such a woman as Lady Wyedale.” Still she felt not quite at ease on this important point, and with the quick-sightedness of love, she also began to fear she perceived a diminution in those nameless attentions which mark the exclusive attachment of a devoted heart. He often pressed her to

consent to be his before the stipulated twelve months expired—was ever ready to accompany her in her walks—read to her—talked to her of their future arrangements and pursuits when she should be mistress of Alverstone; but she fancied he did not now, as formerly, hang on her words—solicit her opinion—or rest satisfied with it when given, unless it had had the sanction of Rosalind, or her aunt.

When the mind is already in a state of irritation, trivial events sometimes accelerate a crisis that might otherwise never have been produced.

Lady Wyedale, who seldom knew what it was to feel complacent except when detailing her catalogue of complaints, with their attendant symptoms, and medical treatment,—after a long recapitulation of her sufferings to an acquaintance one day, observed, that she should feel less reluctance to leave London in the ensuing summer than she had ever previously done, because she should be able to have the advice of a Dr. Dursley, a physician of some eminence, lately settled in the vicinity of the Lodge. “And though I have reason to apprehend, from all that I have heard, he is well cal-

culated for forming a connexion with his sanctified neighbours, the Berkelys, yet I shall not suffer my dislike to his private character, to deprive me of the benefit I may derive from his abilities."

"There you are quite right," said her obliging acquaintance. Besides, it would perhaps be wrong to visit too severely a folly into which he has been led by his family. I am, however, entirely of your opinion, my dear Lady Wyedale; and I can, with truth, say, I have never found religion prevent any one from doing what they like—living as they please—saying what they think. To set up for a saint you have only to leave off public amusements—go to church whenever the doors are open—patronise Bible Societies, and fill the heads of the poor so full of learning, that they will never be fit for work, or for discharging the duties of their station. You may then eat, drink, dress, revile your neighbours; and, in short, indulge every bad passion of the heart without scruple or remorse."

This just and liberal delineation of a religious character, produced a burst of applause from Lady Wyedale, a laugh from Rosalind, a

smile from Evanmore; and, satisfied that she had accurately depicted the pursuits and enjoyments of the pious, their acquaintance proceeded in high spirits to communicate a fact before unknown to them; namely, that Dr. Dursley, it was supposed, would really strengthen his interest in the country by an alliance with Miss Berkely.

Aware how much Lady Wyedale disliked her friends, the Berkelys, Felicia now never alluded to them, though in close correspondence with Miss Berkely; and, surprised at receiving this unexpected intelligence, she paid to the conversation a degree of attention of which she had not previously thought it deserving.

“Oh! if that is the case, he must be far gone indeed, for Miss Berkely is quite a fanatic,” rejoined Lady Wyedale, with a sly look at Felicia,—too happy to have the opportunity of wounding her, through her friends, to neglect it.

“A fanatic!” exclaimed Evanmore—“dreadful! Dr. Dursley must have very different feelings from mine. Nothing would be so terrible to me as to have an enthusiastic, visionary

woman for my wife. In the present state of society it is impossible to live the life of an ascetic. I think, indeed, however attached, I could never so far permit my prudence to sleep, as to unite myself to one who was always aiming at impracticable excellence, never satisfied with those around her, because they fall short of that degree of perfection which it is impossible mere mortals can ever attain.

“ When caps among a crowd are thrown,
Each guilty head will claim its own, ”

is a received maxim. Sometimes, however, a cap may be thrown with so good an aim, that it must necessarily fall on some head, it may not nevertheless fit.”

Felicia felt these remarks did not apply to her. She was no surly fanatic—no frantic enthusiast; she aspired only to that perfection which many had already reached, and could not see either fanaticism or enthusiasm in silently endeavouring to live in conformity with the precepts of Christianity. Yet she listened to them with an alarm which she vainly tried to conceal even from herself, as the chilling omens of future misfortune. She had instinctively looked at him, when their visitor, after

summing up the necessary qualifications of a religious character, finished the portrait by a laugh, that was instantly echoed by Lady Wyedale, and though he merely smiled, it was one of mingled import, and rather resembled the unnatural sun-shine that often precedes a tempest, than that which promises a smiling day. Her eye met his—its expression conveyed no warmth to her heart; and scarcely knowing what she did, she turned to a table and took up a volume he had been reading. It was a work of Marmontel. Anxious to hide her uneasiness and embarrassment, she opened it, and glancing over the page, her attention was arrested by the following passage:

“Whether those who cease to please, or those who cease to be pleased, are most to blame, it may sometimes be difficult to determine. So difficult that, when this becomes a question between two friends, they perhaps had better part than venture upon the discussion.”

Felicia seized the book, and rushed out of the room. “Part!” she exclaimed, while large tears flowed over her face. “Part—with Evanmore! he whom I have loved since child-

hood—he whose image is intertwined around every avenue of my heart! Oh no, no, it cannot be! Yet are not our views now at variance? Has he not learnt to esteem me a bigot? And oh, may not his own principles have undergone a change which must separate us for ever!”—she shuddered and wept, bitterly wept. Again she perused the passage, which seemed so suddenly to have drawn from her eyes the bandage she had so long struggled to bind over them. Her tastes were not inflexible; but her principles she knew were; and while she felt that she should have a pride and a pleasure in sacrificing all minor opinions to his, she was aware that on those essential points where only they seemed materially to disagree, she should be immoveable. So at least she now believed, but might she not be too secure in her own fancied strength? Ought she to unite her fate to one whose faith was unsound? Had she not herself reason to dread, that the frailty of her nature, unsupported by his guiding hand, might hereafter be exposed to trials which her attachment to him might render her unable to surmount. “And even if this were not the case,” she cried, as these reflections presented

themselves to her imagination, "Oh, how could I support the idea that he who constituted my whole of happiness here, would never join with me in a holier, purer union hereafter—that our separation, when death should consign us to the earth from whence we sprung should be eternal? And how wide spread would be my misery, and the misery of those most dear to me! How could I hope to impress on the minds of my children the hopes, the fears, the joys of a Christian, when with dawning intelligence they would see their Father was a stranger to them? Oh, what is the anguish I now feel, to the bitter pangs that would thrill through my breaking heart on witnessing the declining piety, the wavering virtue, the growing indifference of a husband to whom my endeavours after goodness, must appear the madness of a zealot, or the folly of an enthusiast? Yes, we must part!" she continued, folding her hands with anguish as she spoke, "My aunt conjured me in her last moments never to let any earthly love engross the best affections of my soul; and shall I be obeying her commands if I voluntarily unite myself to a man who feels not as I feel—whose dear, but dan-

gerous example may at length lead me from the path of virtue?"

Yet to tear herself from a man whose attachment endeared her existence, and whose image had been associated with her every vision of happiness, required a *dégré* of fortitude which she found herself unequal to exercise; and after many struggles to acquire composure for the task, she resolved to communicate her griefs, scruples, and fears to the bosom of a lady with whom she had not been for some years very intimate, but on whose friendship, prudence, and judgment she knew she might implicitly depend.

Mrs. Marshington, the lady to whom she determined to confide her uneasiness, and by whose opinion she resolved to be guided, had been, four years before, her friend and companion. Her marriage with a gentleman who resided in a distant county, then dissolved an intimacy from which each had derived sincere gratification; and though they had not since met, and Mrs. Marshington's situation as a wife and mother forbade that frequent intercourse which had so many years subsisted between them, they had never ceased to cor-

respond. Mrs. Marshington was six or seven years older than Felicia, but this circumstance had proved no impediment to the friendship Mrs. Beauclerc wished to encourage between them ; for Mrs. Marshington found no other acquaintance whose tastes and pursuits were so similiar to her own ; and Felicia, deprived of the society of Rosalind, fondly clung to her as a sort of elder sister in whose company she should find some consolation for the loss of her whose image constantly dwelt in her bosom. Congenial ideas and mutual esteem augmented, as they advanced towards womanhood, their juvenile regard ; and, next to the loss of Rosalind, Felicia regretted that of Mrs. Marshington, when she at length left Leominster, to reside with her husband's relations in Leicestershire. With her engagement to Mr. Evanmore she was of course acquainted, and having known something of him before her marriage, Felicia flattered herself she was peculiarly competent to decide upon this important subject. With a breaking heart she therefore sat down, and after stating her situation, views, and apprehensions as dispassionately as she could, dispatched her letter to the post-office, and en

deavoured to await a reply with tolerable composure. She was, however, at one of those momentous periods of our being which precludes the possibility of being calm. Her fate hung on Mrs. Marshington's answer, and vainly she tried to regard with tranquillity the arrival of a letter which would decide whether she should be for ever miserable or for ever happy. If Mrs. Marshington should, after well weighing the contents of her letter, and investigating the nature of her complaints against Evanmore, think she had no reason to apprehend his principles to be impaired by his residence in London, she felt she could receive him again to her bosom with renewed attachment; and, in the consciousness that she had injured him, bury the remembrance of those little instances of seeming want of affection which she had resented. After four days of extreme perturbation, and unceasing anxiety, a letter from Mrs. Marshington was put into her hands; and trembling, from the intensity of feelings, wound up to the highest possible pitch of anxiety, she read the following lines:—

“ So long a time had elapsed since I last wrote to you, my dear Felicia, that I was be-

ginning to apprehend you had forgotten me in the gaiety and happiness of your present situation, when your letter arrived, not only to remove so unpleasing a suspicion, but demonstrate to me, yet more fully, the fallacy of my judgment, and the uncertainty of all human enjoyments. As I am aware you cannot feel the least interest on any other subject at such a period, I will hasten to the contents of your letter; and, as you have so fairly stated your feelings and wishes, give you my opinion with the candour you have a right to expect from a friend, in return for your desire to be advised.

“After carefully considering the cause of your anxiety, and reflecting on the temptations to which Mr. Evanmore has been exposed, I own I am inclined to think he is not yet undeserving of your attachment; or that you will run any real risk in uniting your fate to his.”

A cry of joy burst from Felicia, and pressing the letter to her lips, she imprinted on it the glad kiss of heartfelt delight. “Oh, we have not parted!” she cried—“never, never, shall!—My Evanmore—how have I injured thee—how have I deceived myself!” Overpowered by these delightful emotions, some minutes elapsed

before she could resume the perusal of her letter, which ran thus :—

“ From the little that I knew of Mr. Evanmore, and from all I have heard of him, I am disposed to believe he is a very amiable young man; and as his addresses received the sanction of your aunt, I think you should not hastily or rashly refuse to fulfil your engagement with him. Let me, however, not be misunderstood. I hold this opinion *only from* the persuasion I entertain, that he is *worthy* of your regard, and before you fulfil it, I earnestly entreat you to satisfy yourself both by private observation, and open expostulation, that your present doubts are unfounded—that his principles are such as, I feel assured, Mrs. Beauclerc believed they were, when she gave her consent to his union with you. I am certainly not inclined to think his merely liking public amusements, or his dreading you might become a fanatic, any proof of his want of religion. The former are scenes of great allurements, and few *young men*, however serious, can be made to see any thing in them of an injurious tendency; and you must remember that, exposed as he has been to the contagion of Lady Wyedale’s sentiments,

listening as he has done to her censures of your (as she deems it) overstrained piety, he would have been almost more than you could reasonably expect, had he escaped being in the slightest degree influenced by them. When a physician is called in to decide on a difficult question, it is equally his duty and his interest, not only to give the case his most minute attention, but state his opinion, however unpleasant, both to the invalid and himself, so clearly, that his patient may never afterwards have reason to complain of his skill or his sincerity. Esteeming myself placed in that situation, I have bestowed much consideration on the subject of your uneasiness, and I trust you will forgive my, perhaps, unpalatable explicitness, when I say, that on re-perusing your letter, I fear I should ill discharge my obligations to you did I omit to mention, that I am a little apprehensive you have felt more mortification at Mr. Evanmore's being so frequently the companion of the captivating Rosalind, than you are probably yourself aware of.

“ One of the most difficult, yet most important species of learning we can ever attain is, such an acquaintance with the recesses of

our own hearts as to enable us to see plainly the *motives* of our conduct. Even the best and wisest of men, without this information, may be so deluded by the glittering halo in which self-love encircles us, as to imagine they are acting under the *influence* of truth and reason, when they are in reality *influenced* by far less honourable guides. I request, therefore, you will seriously examine your own heart, and endeavour to ascertain whether your present unwillingness to continue your engagement with Mr. Evanmore springs not rather from secret pique or wounded pride, than any real, well founded apprehension of his declining piety; for it is unhappily too common an error among serious people, especially young persons of our own sex, from the want of this self-knowledge, to fancy, when they act from the dictates of disappointed affection or misplaced zeal, that they are governed by motives of religion. Be therefore firm to your own principles; but keep a clear eye in discerning between a sense of duty and a feeling of inclination. I have thought it right, both for your sake and Mr. Evanmore's, to offer these apologies for the seeming inconsistency of his conduct, and suggest these

hints for the regulation of your's. Again, however, I implore, that you will not misconceive my meaning. If, after scrutinizing his heart and your own, you have, on further intimacy, reason to fear that the sentiments of Lady Wyedale and her friends have sunk deeply into his mind, and are likely to give a tinge to his future character, or that his present pursuits have become fixed habits which will incapacitate him from fulfilling his duties as a country gentleman, a husband, and a father, let not your attachment prevent you from instantly relinquishing your claims to his hand. It may cause you much pain ; but stand erect in your own virtue, and it will be a panoply to guard you from every real misery.

The tear that flows from disappointed friendship, the thrill that shoots through the heart on seeing itself capriciously deserted, is bitter indeed ; but the anguish of one self-reproach is ten thousand times more poignant, more afflictive. Under this trial, you will, I am assured, do justice to the education bestowed upon you by your inestimable aunt. You have been entrusted with a rational and immortal soul, and you must not abuse, or trifle with the

sacred deposit committed to your charge, by unnecessarily subjecting your faith to the sneers or arguments of a beloved husband. Act up to the dignity of your nature, though the sacrifice of all you hold most dear be the result. Remember this mortal scene is one of transient duration ; it will soon close alike on the cares and pleasures of life ; and when the hour of dissolution shall at length arrive, every past anxiety, every former attachment, will merge in the one awful consideration of death. Joys and griefs will then only be remembered as having afforded opportunities of virtue. Guilt will be esteemed the only real misery : the hope of inheriting eternity the only blissful sentiment that can irradiate the darkness of the expiring soul.

“ Entreating you never to lose sight of these awful truths, I now bid you adieu, and with the sincerest regard and esteem, believe me

“ Your affectionate

“ And sympathizing Friend;

“ ANNE MARSHINGTON.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ There is a pleasure in poetic pains,

Which only poets know. * *

* * * * *

—Lost in his own musings, happy man !

He feels th’ anxieties of life, denied

Their wonted entertainment, all retire.

Such joys has he that sings. But ah ! not such,

Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.”

Cowper.

THOUGH the conclusion of Mrs. Marshington’s letter, and its general tenor, a little damped the exuberant joy Felicia had felt on first glancing over its commencement, she was too much relieved by the certainty, that Mrs. Marshington saw no reason for her separation from Evanmore, to be inclined to diminish her present happiness by any gloomy anticipations of the future. Evanmore was again her own—

she had, Mrs. Marshington believed, judged him harshly, and she was not disposed to scrutinize too nicely a decision from which she received so much pleasure.

It has been justly observed, that when our feelings are sufficiently composed to allow us to commit our thoughts to verse, we can no longer be under very acute sensations of misery ; and Felicia was a striking instance of the truth of the remark. During the period that she was balancing between her attachment and her duty, she would have been incapable of connecting half a dozen ideas in tolerably appropriate language. Her person was, indeed, the inhabitant of Lady Wyedale's mansion, but her mind had flown to Leicestershire, or was solely employed in speculating on the probable contents of Mrs. Marshington's reply. Now, however, when restored to Evanmore and happiness, she had leisure and inclination to think ; and reverting to Mrs. Marshington's former kindness, the endeavours she had made to imprint on her youthful mind those lessons she had received from Mrs. Beauclerc, and her present desire to promote her happiness, she took out a pencil, and wrote the

following lines on the cover of Mrs. Marshington's letter :—

Oh, believe not, my love, that I e'er can forget
A friend who's so faithful and true ;
Oh, no! till the sun of my life shall be set,
I must ever think fondly of you.

No: the flowers of gratitude never can fade
In a bosom so ardent as mine,
Or apathy listlessly fling in the shade
The remembrance of kindness like thine.

Dear guide of my youth, instructed by thee,
Each rude passion shall sink into rest,
As the storm that raves wild o'er the billowy sea,
Is hushed at its Maker's behest.

She had just finished the last stanza when Rosalind flew into the room. Her eye was lighted up with the wicked glee of a lively school-boy on achieving some little act of juvenile roguery.

“ Ah! what are you also in the agonies of composition, Philly? Why, I have only just got out of them myself!” She caught the letter out of her sister's hand as she spoke, and eagerly read the lines. “ To be sure there is a wide difference in the nature of our lucubra-

tions. Thy muse and mine are as diametrically opposite as thou and myself—more I cannot say ! And now for the key to what has made me for the first time a poet. You know there has long been a suspicion afloat that Mr. Flickerton (the poor white-eyed, red-haired, wild-looking man, you may remember, I pointed out at Brighton) was an admirer of the *foolosopher*, who bored you so dreadfully about spring-tides and neap-tides, the influence of the moon on comets, brains, &c. &c. at Lady Wyedale's second party. Well, this was a subject on which I always felt very sceptical, yet very curious, and last night at the theatre, as my good genius would have it, my doubts and desires were gratified. We all sat in the same box ; and about the conclusion of the first act, Flickerton had occasion to use his handkerchief. As he drew it out, a piece of crumpled writing-paper took the liberty of emerging from the obscurity of his pocket at the same time ; and as it fell close to me, I saw a great Miss B———elevated above half a dozen other words. The rogue dropt at my feet, and I instantly secured the prize by placing one of my pretty *pieds* upon it. Perhaps it was not strictly honourable ; but the

temptation was too much for my virtue, and I resolutely maintained possession of what I had thus secured through the evening. I am not sure he was without some remote suspicion that he had sustained a loss; for I saw him pry with his hand into every corner of his pocket once or twice, and cast an investigating suspicious eye around him as often. But though I shook in my shoes, as the saying is, I kept the culprit, whose indiscreet desire to see the world had thus subjected him to my thralldom, safe in durance vile. Setting or standing, still I contrived to hide the little villain from view. My legs ached terribly; but every rose has its thorn, and when (after having with an affected humility that astonished and delighted both, declined to go out of the box first), I seized the momentary opportunity afforded by their absence of dropping my handkerchief on the ground, and securing the prostrate captive: I felt amply repaid for what I had endured. I scudded with it to my room as soon as I reached home, and read these lines, though written with so many interpolations, alterations, addendas, and interlineations, that I could hardly come at the sense, till I had

fairly copied them out. It cost me a world of trouble ; but the fruits of patience, as I have often heard you sagely remark, though long in coming, are deliciously sweet when they *do come*; and I can attest the truth of the observation, I believe, for the first time,—now listen—

‘ Madam ;

‘ I have at length summoned resolution to say that your many mental and personal attractions have inspired me with a passion I would vainly try to describe. Should you approve of my attachment, my situation will, I hope, be no impediment to our happiness ; as, though fortune has not hitherto been altogether propitious to my wishes, I have no doubt——

* * * * *

Resolution, at length, has been taken by me
To say I adore you, my dearest Miss B—
Indeed my Minerva I love to excess,
And the pangs of a lover what words can express ?
Say, can you, all-bless'd by the smile of renown,
From the heights of Parnassus to me venture down ;
To tread in the vale of domestic delight,
Forget to illumine this dark world with light ?
Oh, can you, who know all that schoolmen can teach,
Philosophers urge, or moralists preach,—

Oh, can you, in pity to love and to me,
Change the laurel wreath green for the sweet myrtle tree?
If you can, take this letter and lock of red hair,
As a proof of the love which to you I now bear;
Oh, may they repose on that bosom of snow,
And induce you, my charmer, to pity my woe!
Oh, may Mr. Beaumont, to mercy inclin'd,
Permit your poor William to open his mind,
And tell of estates he will settle on thee,
Either placed in the moon, or to spring from the sea.
Oh yes, my dear girl, I can proffer at least
Half the riches of Cræsus and gems of the East:
At present, 'tis true, I am not worth much,
And instinctively shrink from a bailiff's rude touch;
But I doubt not, my love, in a year or two more
My pockets with silver and gold will run o'er;
For domains I possess in the bright shining moon
Will yield me their produce, I trust, very soon.
And more than all this, you know very well,
Your learning alone my pockets will swell.
On your knowledge of languages, flowerets, and shells;
On your wit—on your wisdom—my head often dwells:
Of those charms that so justly exalt you o'er all
The poor silly Misses who dance at a ball,
Indeed, 'twould be strange if a dervise, like me,
By a stroke of my wand could not turn to specie.
Then list to thy William, assured thou wilt gain
Some good to thyself, and give ease to his pain;
For, solaced by thy presence, inspired by thine eye,
Exertion must spring, and misfortune must die;
While 'tis sweet through the mazes of knowledge to stray,
Thy smile my reward, and thy praises my bay.

Though the vulgar may stare, and the scornful may smile,
We'll often our evenings with learning beguile.
The loves of the plants thou shalt tell of to me,
And the mysteries of science I'll open to thee.
Then Lucretia, my angel! consider the case,
And deign to unbend that so sage looking face;
For to-morrow to Chelsea I surely will go
Through the wet and the cold, the dirt and the snow;
And if on those lips one smile I may see,
Most gladly shall bend both my right and left knee.
I must now, sweet Minerva, bid you adieu,
And trust me, dread goddess, I speak very true,
When I say, that I'll love you for ever and ever,
Or while death our two hearts most unkindly shall sever.
And till that sad period, in old fashion'd phrase,
Believe me your most fervent lover always.

‘WILLIAM FLICKERTON.’

What, not one word?" she cried, half-playfully, half-angrily, striking Felicia with the paper, after having waited at the conclusion of her lines some moments in expectation of Felicia's speaking.

"Yes—after thus gratifying your humour and your curiosity, I hope you will commit both the paper you so surreptitiously obtained, and the lines they have occasioned, to the flames."

"Commit the first production of my muse to

the flames ! Why, the woman is become jealous, I declare !”

“ No, indeed,” said Felicia, laughing, “ I am not at all envious of your poetical powers, I assure you.”

“ Oh, you vain wretch ! So you esteem them *le rimaille*, do you ? To be sure I did not imagine they would entitle me to dispute the palm with either Scott or Byron ; yet never did I peruse a line of either with half so much pleasure ; and, if they would only be sincere, I question whether Miss Beaumont’s and Mr. Flickerton’s friends might not be able to make the same assertion, with equal truth, when they meet their eyes.”

“ Surely you will not be so imprudent, nor yet so—”

“ I will finish the sentence for you—malevolent as to show them. Well, don’t be alarmed, I will only exhibit them to a few *select* friends.”

“ Not to one, if you value your happiness, or theirs,” cried Felicia, earnestly. “ Never could they forgive such a mortifying attack on all they value most dearly. Oh, you know not the misery their exposure might be productive

of both to you and them. Injuries are sometimes forgiven, but insult and satire never—never.”

“ Oh, *miséricorde!* And must my first-born be consigned to oblivion ?” she passed the back of her hand across her eyes, as if to wipe away her tears. “ Come, come, don’t look so disconsolate,” she suddenly cried, “ and I’ll promise you not to show them to any one but your good man and mine. To Evanmore you can make no objection.”

“ I do not to Evanmore.”

“ And Osborne! you know we twain shall soon become one.”

“ Till you are so, defer the gratification you will receive from his approbation.”

“ Pho, pho, you are so full of fears and scruples, and—”

The entrance of Evanmore interrupted this dialogue, and Felicia, anxious to atone for her late injustice, received his morning salutation with more than even accustomed affection.

When a generous bosom has indulged in suspicions which events afterwards prove unfounded, a consciousness of past errors renders it peculiarly liable to future mistakes. Felicia

felt as if she had injured him by communicating her ill-grounded doubts to Mrs. Marshington, and blushed with shame at the idea of having been led by her affection to be jealous of his brotherly attentions to her sister. She was even almost unwilling, under the influence of these compunctious visitings of conscience, at the exposure of the motives of her own conduct, to commence that strict scrutiny Mrs. Marshington had recommended into his ; and when, at length, reason whispered that Evanmore, if innocent, would come out of the ordeal with fresh glory, she resolved it should be conducted with so much delicacy and charity, that his feelings could not be wounded by the most remote suspicion of her design.

Guided by these sentiments and resolutions, she listened to Evanmore's gay compliments to Rosalind without a ray of uneasiness, and beheld him her constant attendant to every scene of fashionable amusement without alarm.

But even the blind can sometimes distinguish colours—and the deaf adder, which at first refused to listen, may in time be roused to attention. Felicia, though long manfully determined neither to see nor hear any thing

that tended to bring Evanmore down from the pedestal on which she had again placed him, was at length compelled to give unwilling entrance to her former apprehensions. Evanmore had now no efficient plea for continually escorting Rosalind into public. She had a lover always ready to attend her, yet he invariably joined their party; and the gratification he appeared to receive in seeing her admired, seemed rather beyond what a mere intended brother-in-law might be supposed to feel.

“Do fashionable people allow themselves no cessation from this harassing round of pleasures, as they are called?” said she one day, on seeing Rosalind, selecting some flowers for the evening, while Evanmore watched her as she tried their respective merits on her redundant ringlets with unequivocal interest.

“Cessation from this harassing round of pleasures as they are called! Dearest Felicia, what an antediluvian question!” said Evanmore, half blushing at the laugh that burst from Rosalind’s lips.

“Why, had you lived at Leominster one twelve months longer,” cried Rosalind, the fire of her full dark eyes shining through the

tear of derision, that trembled beneath the long rich silken fringes which shaded them, "you would have arrived at such a pitch of perfection, as to have been totally unfit for this terrene world. I verily believe you would have cut off your hair, and resolved to live upon roots and wild honey. I don't even think you would have allowed yourself locusts, had they been come-at-able, for fear of committing a sin by taking life. Evanmore," she continued, turning towards him, and sportively tapping his shoulder with a bunch of the flowers, "this wife of your's will be worth five times as much as she would have been, had she always lived in seclusion, by the time I have laughed her out of a few of her antiquated notions."

"I trust, my dear sister," said Felicia, "I shall always have strength of mind to preserve me from being laughed out of opinions formed in hours of retirement, from a conviction of their truth."

She spoke with sweetness, but Evanmore seemed hurt. "We should be careful not to mistake attachment to peculiar notions, and adherence to the prejudices of childhood, for consistency and virtue," said he gravely.

Tears rushed into Felicia's eyes ; they were the first of a painful nature Evanmore had ever excited, and her first impulse was to leave the room. " No, let me not be hasty," she thought, " he might not mean to wound my feelings. I have already wronged him by unjust surmises ; and a betrayal of my petulance may injure the cause I would wish to serve. Could I more effectually advocate Lady Wyedale's sentiments, than by meeting any little attack on my principles with ill-humour, or impatience ?" The result of these mental interrogations was, her remaining with as composed a brow as she could assume ; but in spite of her endeavours to forget, or disregard Evanmore's remark, it awoke many displeasing reflections, and revived many dormant alarms.

" As usual, Rosalind was the *belle* of the evening," said he one morning.

" She is, indeed, very beautiful," said Felicia, with a half-suppressed sigh.

" Oh, that is a tame epithet to apply to your sister," said he ; " her beauty is her least attraction. She not only eminently possesses that pleasing, undefinable something, denominated by the french *je ne sais quoi* but, a *fleur*

d'esprit which gives a charm even to her most common-place observations."

Felicia assented—but coldly; and the conversation then took a different turn.

"How foolish, how mean I was, to be angry at Evanmore's praises of Rosalind this morning," thought she, as she dressed for dinner, "after Mrs. Marshington's caution too!"

But Felicia was neither a saint nor a heroine: it had reached her heart; and as a spark will sometimes awake the smouldering embers of a dying fire into flame, it suddenly gave life and energy to the suspicions she had been so long trying to hush.

"I will not be precipitate," she cried, after a long and painful retrospection of all that had given birth to these agonizing fears—"but I will be vigilant." Alas! vigilance was not necessary to show her, that Evanmore would never again, in all human probability, be contented with those simple pleasures which had once constituted his sum of earthly enjoyment; or that, though he still loved her, still wished to make her his wife, he had learnt to think her opinions visionary, her pursuits insipid, and her knowledge of life inferior to that evinced

by his fascinating guide and counsellor, Rosalind Leycester. Felicia wept with uncontrollable anguish, as something of the truth gleamed dimly on her mind. Often she tried to enter into that explanation which Mrs. Marshington had advised ; but a secret, undefined sensation of dread, daily withheld her—for she loved—dearly loved ; and while she wished, she feared to be convinced.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Th’ aduress ! what a theme for angry verse !
What provocation to th’ indignant heart,
That feels for injur’d love ! but I disdain
The nauseous task, to paint her as she is,
Cruel, abandon’d, glorying in her shame !
No :—let her pass, and, chariotted along
In guilty splendor, shake the public ways ;
The frequency of crimes has wash’d them white,
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch
Whom matrons now of character unsmirch’d,
And chaste themselves, are not asham’d to own.
Virtue and vice had bound’ries in old time,
Not to be pass’d ; and she, that had renounced
Her sex’s honour, was renounced herself
By all that prized it ; not for prudery’s sake,
But dignity’s,—resentful of the wrong.
’Twas hard, perhaps, on here and there a wife
Desirous to return, and not received :
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught th’ unblemish’d to preserve with care,
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.”

Cowper.

IN the uncertain changing scenes of life,
trivial events frequently become the heralds of

the most important revolutions. Such was the state of Felicia's mind when Lady Wyedale, Rosalind, and herself, received tickets for a masquerade from a Lady Clarinda Lovelace. A fourth ticket was inclosed in the packet for any gentleman whom they might wish to be their protector.

Felicia was out at the time they arrived, and Rosalind accepted the invitation in the name of all. Lady Wyedale, though indisposed, determined to *chaperon* her nieces on this occasion; and the unappropriated ticket was given to Evanmore, who accepted it with gratitude and pleasure. He had never seen a masquerade, and promised himself much gratification from witnessing the first at the house of a lady of quality, not more distinguished by birth than fashion. Rosalind also, though the amusement was no novelty to her, had secret reasons for being disposed to contemplate this with particular delight.

Lady Clarinda was a very distant branch of the Edgermond family, and though some circumstances in her Ladyship's history induced the major part of her connexions to treat her with considerable coldness, Rosalind knew that Lord

Edgermond would not be influenced by them to refrain from attending such a scene. Again she resolved to concentrate all her attractions; and, again, hopes of success, which had no foundation but in vanity and a vague feeling of possibility, found continuance in her bosom.

She was in the midst of a most animated description of the fascinations of such fairy scenes of amusement, when Felicia returned, who on learning she was expected to make one of the party, declined to avail herself of Lady Clarinda's invitation, with a cool firmness that left no doubt of her adhering to her resolution.

Evanmore could not repress his mortification. "Dearest Felicia! really you are a little unaccommodating."

"You would not think so if you knew my reasons."

"Oh! you mean to say, that the *faux-pas* Lady Clarinda, committed a few years ago, is the motive of your refusal," cried Rosalind, a little provoked at any thing which reflected on Lord Edgermond's connexions at such a time.

"That undoubtedly was one of them,"

said Felicia. "And I own, my dearest Rosalind, I wish it had more weight with you."

"Oh! far be it from me to assume the character of a sage and a moralist, and trumpet forth, that I am too virtuous to visit a woman who is visited by all the rest of the world."

"Not all," said Felicia calmly; "for you know, you have often told me, since she was divorced from her first husband, Lord Edgermond's uncle has never countenanced her."

"Oh! he is no criterion."

"No! Is he no criterion, whose life has been devoted to the service of his country—whose splendid talents have been uniformly directed to the benefit of his fellow-creatures—and whose private character is not less distinguished for virtue, than his public one for ability? There my respect for rank is deepened to veneration—and—"

"Really these are points I have no inclination to discuss," interrupted Rosalind coldly; and she turned the conversation with so much evident haste, that Felicia, half suspecting the cause of her petulance, forbore to continue it. But during the fortnight that intervened be-

tween this dialogue, and the day appointed for the masquerade, she omitted no opportunity of gently hinting to Evanmore her *wish*, that he should not, on this occasion, be the escort of Lady Wyedale and Rosalind.

Evanmore listened—that was all. He had been momentarily startled by learning, that Lord Wilberton, a nobleman of distinguished attainments, and high character, for worth, refused to sanction the gay author of this anticipated scene of amusement; but it was soon effaced by Rosalind's assertion, that she was visited by all the *rest* of the world; and, equally unwilling to deprive himself of so much pleasure, or to incur Rosalind's raillery, he was determined not to give way to Felicia's scrupulous delicacy.

The important day at length arrived; and in the anticipation of the joys, glories, and triumphs of the evening, Rosalind spent a restless, indolent day. She could think and talk of nothing else. Felicia, whose well regulated mind never suffered itself to waste in idle speculations, or illusive visions of future happiness, the present hour, saw her with surprise; and as she calmly folded up her work

when the first dinner-bell rung, could not avoid making the trite observation, that no life is more remote from real enjoyment, than a life spent in the pursuit of pleasures which seldom fail to elude the grasp, or, when attained, are accompanied by langour and satiety. As she made the remarks, the door opened, and Evanmore entered.

“Always welcome,” cried Rosalind, “but particularly so now; for I have been all the morning trying to prevail upon Felicia to change her mind, and accompany us this evening, but ineffectually. Perhaps your arguments may be more successful. She might go in a domino without exciting attention, and she would be so much entertained, I cannot endure to see her thus deprive herself of an innocent amusement, to gratify some obsolete prejudice, or attend to some nonsensical punctilio. Really we must quiz her out of all this, Evanmore.”

“I hope,” said Felicia, “that resolutions formed in meditation, will always be proof against thoughtless raillery. And to relieve you from any good-natured uneasiness at my being debarred by them from indulging my

natural feelings, I assure you I should have no amusement in going to the masquerade."

"No amusement!" exclaimed Rosalind.

"No amusement!" echoed Evanmore.

"No, not if the descriptions I have heard and read of such scenes, bear the stamp of veracity. Amused! with what?—A scene of wild and senseless confusion—nuns, friars, goddesses, and devils; satyrs, harlequins, chambermaids, and princesses, distinguished from each other only by a diversity of appearance, and a laboured flippancy of address."

"But admitting this to be a portrait of a masquerade," said Evanmore, "and it is a caricatured one, surely there can be no impropriety in partaking of such a diversion? We cannot always be on stilts, dear Felicia; we must occasionally descend to the amusements and pursuits of our fellow-creatures."

"If its want of attraction or dignity were my only motive for refusing compliance, I might probably be induced to acquiesce, however wearisome and disgusting would be to me the miserable attempts at wit and repartee, which form, I am told, the best part of the diversion; but, indeed, dear Evanmore, as you

thus compel me to be explicit, I must positively decline to mingle with three or four hundred persons, privileged to say whatever occurs to a volatile or depraved imagination; and protected, by a mask, from that disgrace which must otherwise follow the exposure of their sentiments and conduct."

"Dear Felicia, what a prude!—what an inflexible prude you are!" said Rosalind, with a laugh that displayed two rows of teeth vying with oriental pearls in beauty and lustre. "I believe we must leave her," she continued, turning to Evanmore. "I verily think she would expect some such dreadful *finale* as, formerly, always attended the heroines of novels at such wicked places, and in every mask who addressed her, expect to find a bravo hired to carry her off. But don't be alarmed, my dear—men now-a-days can get wives without so much trouble: depend upon it, even Miss Byron herself, in this age, would not have suffered so terribly from her thousand and one lovers."

"You are not decided, Felicia?" cried Evanmore, in a tone of interrogation.

"I am, certainly."

“Then I presume I must go alone?” said he, while a slight colour stole over his cheek.

“If you go at all,” said Felicia pointedly.

A pause of some moments ensued: Evanmore felt the full force of this innuendo, but he could not bear to deny himself so much expected happiness; and equally unable to witness Felicia’s mortification, he caught up his gloves, and hastily wishing them good morning, flew out of the room.

Felicia watched his retreating figure with feelings she vainly attempted to suppress. Till now, she had never been without hopes he might have yielded to her evident wishes; and been sufficiently influenced by his own principles, on reflection, to forego a transient gratification, afforded by a woman who had trampled on every duty of life, and whose present conduct evinced no sentiment of either shame or remorse for the past. Averting her head, that Rosalind might not witness her emotion, she returned to her room, and was soon lost in a train of melancholy reflections. This mournful reverie was interrupted by a hasty foot; the door burst open, and Jenny entered, with a face crimsoned by passion.

“ I’m kum to say as you must provide yourself with another servant, Miss Felicia,” said she, closing the door with terrific violence. “ I can stan’t it no longer. You must get some other body to kum in my place—I must go—I must go—” tears now interrupted her speech ; and sinking into a chair, she sobbed with hysterical emotion. It was in vain that Felicia, alarmed at her strange behaviour and transports of sorrow, requested to know the cause of her distress: the flood-gates of her grief were opened, and she cried till, weary of fruitless importunities, Felicia patiently waited till her violence wore itself away. “ Yes, indeed, Ma’am,” she at length resumed, drying her eyes, and endeavouring to conquer her sobs, that she might relate her injuries distinctly, “ I never can abide here no longer, like a stock-fish for a parcel o’ fools, and thieves, and liars, and baggages, to turn into sport. I’ve been made game on o’er long.”

“ These are strong epithets,” said Felicia, gravely.

“ And true as strong Ma’am,” said Jenny, whose wrath was too great to allow her to see Felicia’s displeasure, “ and I’ll prove my

words; for doesn't the cook tell all manner of things, which I should scorn to tell, only she is so saucy; and doesn't Miss Rosalind's maid give her company to every lounging tassel that slives after her, for no good, as I just now told her—for no good, as she will find to her cost."

"But, admitting these heavy charges to be facts," said Felicia, "would it not be better in you to keep aloof from such society, rather than exasperate those you cannot alter?"

"And I did try to keep myself to myself, but all to no purpose; for they're set against me, because I'll not be 'hail fellow, well met,' with 'em, and have told Miss Rosalind's madam a spice of my mind."

"And why did you?" said Felicia. "You know I have often entreated you to endeavour to keep on terms with her, as she is my sister's favourite servant, and admonished you to conquer your temper. Indeed, Jenny, I fear if you attended to my counsels, you would not have met with so many mortifications."

"I did," cried Jenny. "If I had not, I should have boxed her ears, a saucy good-for-nothing quean."

“I insist upon it,” said Felicia, “that you do not—”

“Indeed, indeed,” sobbed Jenny, “I was not to blame, Miss Felicia, and indeed you shall hear all how and about it. I was sitting as quiet as could be in the servants hall, and I seed a creeper upon Miss Juliana’s gown; so as she is very nesh*, I good naturedly went and took it off. Miss Juliana, says I, here’s a twinge on your gown. Well, instead o’ being thankful for my striving to please her, she bursts out into a saucy glaver, and says, ‘Oh law! Oh law! Mrs. Jenny, do you call an earwig a twinge?’ Well, I was none so well pleased, you may be sartain, but I stomached it; and we sat pretty quiet, till Lord Edgermond’s gentleman came in, and he and Miss Juliana have been mightily civil of late. (He’s a poor sneaking, cringing, clammed looking jackanapes to my fancy!) so there they whispered and whispered, till I said, meaning no harm, dear how grate you are, Miss Juliana and Mr. Simpson; upon which she set up one of her halloos, and in came the foot-

* Timid.

man and Martha, the housemaid, and the cook, to make a scare with her.

“ Dear, said Miss Juliana, I think we will set Mrs. Jenny’s sayings down, they’re so mighty comical; and then they all jeered the more; but I would not seem to mind their jaw, though, thinks I, I’ll be up to you, madam, some day. Well, after a bit,—it’s a high wind, you know to day, ma’am,—and down came the smoke, as they call it; and I, thinking to leave without seeming to take to heart what they had said, says Oh dear, how it puthers! don’t you feel the reek? I can’t abide it. With that, there was such a noise, I could not hear mysen speak, and out took my Lord’s man a bit of a pocket book to set me down, you see, for a fool, Miss Juliana standing by, and telling him I meant smoke, just as if I was some outlandish natural, as nobody could understand. Flesh and blood couldn’t stand it no longer: so I plucked up my spirit, and I gave ’em as good as they brought. But what is one to half a dozen? Then what provoked me most was, to see my Lord’s man, with his sly, nimble, dainty, delicate fingers, that look as if he never did a hand’s stir for his meat, writing

down every word I said; so that I thought it best to get shut of them. Good riddance of bad rubbish, said I; and if you'll believe me Miss,"—tears of shame again rolled over her face—"they followed me, asking me to say, good riddance, over again, for fear they had not got it right set down, almost to your door."

At this recollection of the indignities offered to her understanding, her rage again blazed forth with such violence as to impede further utterance, and sobs of convulsive passion shook her frame. Here ceased her mortifying relation; and with her apron held to her eyes, she waited in clamorous grief, while Felicia with pain dwelt upon her narrative. Jenny's native desire to oblige, was so well known to her, that she doubted not she had endured much of a disagreeable nature ere her habitual sweetness of temper was roused to its present acrimony. Yet she could not interfere in her behalf against the domestics of Lady Wyedale, and the favourite servant of Rosalind; and only by soothing the irritated temper of poor Jenny, could she hope to effect any alteration in their behaviour.

"You do not, indeed, appear the aggressor,"

said she, after a pause, "but still, as they are the servants of my aunt, I hope you will overlook their behaviour, and keep yourself so entirely from them, that they can have no opportunity of ill-treating you. I will do all I can to render your place agreeable to you; and, for my sake, I trust you will forget this unmerited behaviour."

Jenny wept again; but her tears now flowed from a better source. "Indeed I wish to stay, dear Miss Felicia, if I can: if they will only let me alone, I shan't meddle with them."

"Well said, Jenny," replied Felicia; "now you are evincing how much you have profited by the example and instruction of my poor aunt—" her voice faltered. "We have all our trials, and must endeavour to bear them with patience and meekness. I have mine—"

"Oh! yes," sobbed Jenny, "I know you have, dear, sweet Miss Felicia; and that it is which makes me so very bitter against Miss Juliana. Never, no never, would I have presumed to hint no such a thing before; but as you have pleased to say it, Miss Felicia, of your own head and accord, oh, I will make bold to say, how it goes to my heart, to see such

collections and doings between Mr. Evanmore and Miss Rosalind."

Felicia turned very pale, and walked to the window to conceal her agitation. The stroke was so sudden, she had not power to speak.

"Even the other servants say it is too bad. And what purvoked me, worse than all the rest, this blessed morning, was, when I said, 'Well, Miss Juliana, I shall soon be out of your gait; my lady will soon be married, and then I shall be shut of you;' she said, with a sly scornful leer, 'Don't reckon your chickens afore they're hatched.' 'What,' says I (for I knew what she was after), 'do you have the impudence to say as how Mr. Evanmore will leave my young lady to marry Miss Rosalind?' With that she fired up, and said, with a courtesy, 'No, Miss Jenny, I don't say as *how* Mr. Evanmore will marry Miss Rosalind; she'll not take up with such as he, I've a notion; but any body may see who he would like to have; but he knows Miss Rosalind looks higher than a pitiful thousand a year; and then she winked at my Lord Edgermond's gentleman, and he said, 'Yes, indeed, Mr. Evanmore would be no match for Miss Rosalind.' 'What,' says I, 'when he is good enough for my lady! He not fit for

her, forsooth! with all her flirting, fly-be-sky ways! My mistress is before her any day. She is not fit to hold a candle to her sister, I tell you, Miss saucebox.’”

“I am sorry your attachment to me led you to speak disrespectfully of my sister,” said Felicia, by a mighty effort concealing her tremulous tones, as she still stood with her back to the exasperated Jenny. “Never let it again hurry you so far away. My sister is very lively, and, perhaps, inconsiderate; but she is most amiable; and I am sure she would be incapable of endeavouring to alienate Mr. Evanmore’s affections from me. I shall be much offended if you ever presume to hint this subject to me again.”

“I hope, Ma’am, ’tis as you say,” said Jenny; “but, indeed, indeed, Ma’am, though I say it, that perhaps should not say it, Miss Rosalind has a very enticing eye, and a way with her, that, somehow, always makes the gentlemen look at her a second time. And even Miss Juliana herself said, when she came from Brighton, it was too bad while you were tenting and tantling about my Lady Wyedale, for Miss Rosalind and Mr. Evanmore to be a see-

ing of all the grand sights by themselves, and riding all over the country on donkies, or Jerusalem ponies, as they call them, wickedly enough to my mind."

"Silence!" said Felicia, in a tone that instantly struck Jenny dumb.

Shrinking from the idea of betraying to Jenny how she had been affected by her unexpected betrayal of the light in which Evanmore was regarded, Felicia then exerted herself to repress her augmented anguish. The dinner-bell rung as she finished the irksome duties of the toilet, and after desiring Jenny to finish some work she had previously given her, in a tone calculated to appease her uneasiness and alarm, she descended to the saloon, a prey to feelings it would be idle to attempt to portray.

She had not the most remote suspicion that Rosalind had ever seriously wished to estrange Evanmore from her; but she now began to believe her witcheries had, without design, acquired dominion over him—remembered his warm encomiums of her beauty, her wit, her elegance—his desire to consult her opinion, his respect for her judgment. The tears of disappointed affection and wounded pride, that

this idea called to her eyes, were accompanied by a sensation of yet more acute anguish, at the reflection, that Evanmore could not have thus fallen a sacrifice to her sorceries—could not thus have forgotten his sacred engagement to herself, had their views, principles, or pursuits, been any longer in unison.

“Yes, I fear it is all over,” she cried, when Lady Wyedale and Rosalind had retired to dress, and she found herself left alone in the solitary drawing-room. “At least the time for that explanation I have so long deferred is arrived; and though Evanmore may not yet feel Rosalind’s power so deeply as to wish to separate from me, I must tear myself from him if—” her faltering tongue refused to proceed; and leaning her head on her hand, she gave way to the anguish that swelled her bosom.

From this ebullition of grief, she was roused by a double rap at the front door. “Evanmore!” she cried; and hastily dashing the tears from her eyes, she waited his approach. Immersed in reflection, she had omitted to ring for candles; and by the uncertain light of the fire, Evanmore saw only, that she looked very grave. Something like a sense of conscious

unkindness stole over his bosom, and damped the pleasure he had been trying to persuade himself he should experience at the masquerade. He drew his chair closer to her's, and fondly took her hand.

"Dear Felicia!" he cried, "I wish you were going with me this evening. I shall have little pleasure without you. Why will you not comply with my wishes?"

"Evanmore, you know my reasons for declining. Oh! that you could assign any half as satisfactory to my feelings, as those I have avowed must be to yours."

Evanmore felt affected. "Nay, Felicia, you must not think me unkind. You know me too well—" A servant at that moment entered with candles, and ere they could resume the conversation thus interrupted, Rosalind burst upon their astonished senses in her masquerade habit.

Never had she looked more lovely, more transcendantly beautiful; and Felicia instinctively turned to view her with the fond eyes of sincere affection. Light drapery of blue satin, edged with ermine, displayed the graceful form it affected to conceal. The short petticoat carelessly looped up in front, revealed

the symmetry of her exquisitely proportioned foot and ancle. Luxuriant curls of golden lustre seemed to disdain the restraint of her diamond comb, and at intervals waved over the brilliant crescent that sparkled on her polished forehead. A small silver quiver, suspended by a costly chain of the same material, was gracefully thrown over her finely formed shoulders, and an arrow of masterly workmanship glittered in the ivory hand that held it. Her dark eye shone in the liquid brilliancy of youth "elate and gay." Her radiant complexion glowed with a tint of more than unusually rich carmine; and the sportive smile of joy and triumph that lighted up her fascinating features, revealed the exquisite formation of her lips, the dazzling whiteness of her teeth—

"Glittering in beauty and in innocence—
A radiant vision in her joy she moved :
More like a poet's dream, in form divine,
Heaven's prototype of perfect womanhood,
So lovely was the presence, than a thing
Of earth, and perishable elements."

Evanmore gazed at her with blended feelings of admiration and astonishment. "We will call you Luna," cried he, "queen of the night.

Yet no, not Luna, for that implies a borrowed light; and your's, fair goddess, is no reflected lustre. Rather should you have chosen the character of Juno, for you are peerless. How proud will Osborne be to-night."

"Osborne!" repeated she, in a tone of mortification. "Oh! true, he is to be there. I had forgotten that."

"The claims of love should never be forgotten," said Felicia, in a low voice.

Evanmore looked earnestly at her, and saw the traces of tears on her pale cheek. "Rosalind!" he cried, in a hesitating voice, "I believe—I think—I cannot—indeed, my dear Felicia—"

Lady Wyedale entered. "All is ready," said Rosalind, taking his arm. "Come, along man; and, I say, remember you keep yourself ready for waltzing, when I call upon you to exhibit with me. I shall not choose to cut any capers with Osborne, at Lady Clarinda's, I can tell him."

The compliment—the prospect of dancing with such a partner, conquered Evanmore's rising scruples. "Good night, dear Felicia," said he; she did not speak—he turned to look

at her as he left the room—she was leaning with her head on her arm, her face bent on the ground; and again a suspicion that he was wrong in leaving her thus lonely and dejected, thrilled through his heart.

“Evanmore,” cried Rosalind, as he lingered at the door, “give your arm to my aunt.” He instantly obeyed; but his eye rested on Felicia; and when she vanished from his sight, her melancholy figure still pursued him.

“I will not leave her speedily again,” he thought, as he stepped into the carriage; and with this resolution, he tried to banish the uneasy sensations that incapacitated him from feeling all the happiness he had anticipated, from his initiation into the mysteries and joys of a masquerade.

The silent hour, when “busy crowds retire to revel or to rest,” was passed by Felicia in earnest self-examination, and bathed in the bitter tears which are wrung by the unkindness of those we love.

It was a cold dark night, the wind rose and fell in gusts, or died away in low sullen moans; and an expiring fire feebly glimmering in the grate, involved the room in a shade of melan-

choly obscurity. The square was deserted; and the domestics of Lady Wyedale, at an immeasurable distance from her, interrupted not the dreary stillness around. As she sat lonely in her apartment, a feeling of chilly desolateness stole over her heart, and once she half questioned the propriety and expediency of pursuing that rigid system of self-denial, which had subjected her to so severe a disappointment.

“Surely,” she murmured, as she reviewed the motives of her conduct, in refusing to comply with Evanmore’s wishes, “this springs not from obstinate adherence to my own prejudices; but results from a sense of duty. And he who is to be the guardian of my happiness and honour, ought not to despise or condemn these struggles to acquire the perfection of the Christian character. No, I may be mistaken, but I can commit no error in refusing to enter scenes from which I could derive no pleasures, to compensate for the apprehension of their being wrong. I might, perhaps, a few months ago, have flattered myself, that ardent attachment would imperceptibly impel him to a closer union with me

on these points ; for sometimes the wife is dearer than the bride. But to whom ? To him whose principles are strong enough to survive the decay of beauty—who is alive to the charms of domestic life—not, alas ! to one, whose hopes of happiness center in seeing the wife of his bosom—the protectress of his honour—the mother of his children—the bauble of a ball-room—the homage of the unthinking. Not, alas ! to him who, as a lover, could refuse the petition of her whose heart he knew was devoted to him ;—that he might partake of a trifling gratification, could leave her lonely, dejected, and displeased.”

Rising sobs interrupted this mournful soliloquy. She not only saw the inconsistency of the hope, that he would ever become the firm guardian of the principles of another, whose own she had so much reason to fear were doubtful, but with anguish perceived that she might become a *neglected* wife, if united to one so little capable of esteeming her character, or appreciating her feelings. As this idea presented itself to her tortured mind, she seized a sheet of paper—wrote a few hurried lines to request, that he would visit Russel-square at

twelve the next morning, as she particularly desired a private interview with him; and then threw herself on her bed, with the agony of one who feels that all earthly happiness has passed away.

END OF VOL. I.









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